

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY / SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF GOOD QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This report identifies the latest position on key planning issues affecting the District.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. That the report on strategic planning matters be noted.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1. To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters and progress on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1. None

**5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

5.1. The Executive Member for Planning and Transport and Deputy have been briefed on the matters set out above. The Local Plan Project Board is regularly consulted and updated upon matters affecting the ongoing Local Plan Examination.

**6. FORWARD PLAN**

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a Key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

**7. BACKGROUND**

7.1. Members will be aware of, and familiar with, many of the issues surrounding the strategic planning matters referred to in paragraph 1.1 above. This report is intended to provide Members with the current positions on these matters. As with previous reports, only those matters where there has been substantive new information or change are reported upon.

## 8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

### *Other Plans and Examinations*

- 8.1. **Welwyn Hatfield** – The Inspector is conducting a focussed consultation on the Council's revised objectively assessed need of 13,800 homes. He has identified that this will require further hearing sessions that have been scheduled to begin on 23 February 2021.
- 8.2. **St Albans** – The Council has formally withdrawn its draft Local Plan from examination. Work will now begin on a replacement. An initial 'Duty to Co-operate' meeting between the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, his St Albans counterpart and officers has been scheduled for 1 February 2021.
- 8.3. **Central Bedfordshire** – Resumed hearings into the Plan were held between 7 and 18 December 2020. At the time of writing, no further information or next steps have been provided. Any update will be verbally reported at the Cabinet meeting.

### *North Hertfordshire Local Plan*

- 8.4. Further hearing sessions into the North Hertfordshire Local Plan were held between Monday 23 November and Thursday 10 December 2020 exploring a range of issues. At the conclusion of the hearings, the Council held a 'wash up' session with the Inspector to discuss next steps. Recordings of all the sessions are available on [the Council's YouTube channel](#).
- 8.5. The Council committed to providing all outstanding information arising from the latest hearings prior to Christmas. These actions were completed and submitted under the delegated authority granted by Full Council in April 2017 including [further information relating to the unmet housing need arising from Luton](#).
- 8.6. At the 'wash up' session, the Inspector undertook to advise the Council of any substantive issues or concerns arising from the matters considered at the hearings by the end of January 2021 at the latest. Any correspondence received in advance of the meeting will be tabled as an addendum and / or reported verbally to Cabinet as appropriate.
- 8.7. Two further hearings are scheduled to take place in the first week of February 2021 relating to proposed allocation 'BK3' in Barkway and the Council's proposed approach to the masterplanning of larger developments. The latter session links to the outcomes and actions of the Corporate Peer Challenge and Housing Delivery Test Action Plans approved by Cabinet in June 2020. The Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for these sessions along with associated guidance have been [published on the website](#). Statements for these sessions are to be submitted by 20 January 2021.
- 8.8. Following these sessions, the Inspector has outlined his intention to hold a final, focussed consultation which will then inform his final report. A special Cabinet meeting to allow any consultation to proceed in a timely fashion has been provisionally scheduled for 9 February 2021.

### *Neighbourhood Plans*

- 8.9. The Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan is subject to a separate report to this meeting.

- 8.10. The Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan is expected to be submitted to the Council in early 2021 with Regulation 16 consultation to follow. In July 2018, Cabinet delegated authority to approve this period of public consultation to the Director of Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport to avoid unnecessary delay in the process where all necessary documentation is received. Any delegated decision will be published and notified to Members once taken.

#### ***Government announcements***

- 8.11. The Government has stated that the next steps in response to its [Planning for the Future White Paper \(August 2020\)](#) will be announced in the Spring.

#### ***London Luton Airport***

- 8.12. Officer meetings regarding the proposed expansion for Luton Airport and the Luton Airport Regional Forum have recommenced after being placed on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic. As previously advised, LLAL continue to [state on their website](#) that they are expecting to submit their Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate in 2021. In addition, officers are working with HCC in preparing a response to the proposed changes to LLA arrivals airspace consultation which concludes on 5 February 2021. The response will be subjected to Exec Member sign off and a copy will be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet.

Details of the consultation can be viewed on the following link:

[https://consultations.airspacechange.co.uk/london-luton-airport/ad6\\_luton\\_arrivals/](https://consultations.airspacechange.co.uk/london-luton-airport/ad6_luton_arrivals/)

#### ***Other transport, planning and infrastructure matters***

- 8.13. The **Transport User Forum** resumed this month holding its first meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January since March 2020. The topic covered was Community Transport with presentations provided by representatives from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, North Herts. CVS and Royston & District Community Transport. The topic clearly proved popular with the highest attendance so far for a meeting of the Forum, with a good mixture of NHDC Councillors, HCC Members, Parish Councils and organisations represented. The date for the next Transport Users Forum is still to be decided.
- 8.14. **Sustainable Travel Towns** – both submissions for Letchworth Garden City and Royston submitted by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and Royston Town Council respectively, with support from NHDC, were successful in being initially shortlisted along with the submission for Stevenage by HCC's Growth, Infrastructure, Planning and the Economy Panel. The next stage will be to work up the proposed submissions in more extensive detail for submission to the Panel in July 2021 for final sign-off. Working Groups for both submissions have been established, having held their first meetings initially between Officers with Councillor involvement is expected in due course. In addition, it is hoped that a slot for the Sustainable Travel Town schemes will be included at the next Highways Liaison meeting on the 15th February.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, the Constitution states that it may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters, applications for, approval/designation, consultation/referendums revocations (or recommend revocation) of neighbourhood plans and orders, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).
- 9.2. The preparation of statutory plans is guided by a range of acts and associated regulations including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Localism Act 2011. All local planning authorities are bound by a statutory Duty to Co-operate on cross-border planner matters.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no new financial implications arising from this report. The costs of preparing the Local Plan and running the examination are reviewed on a regular basis and are reported through the quarterly revenue monitoring reports to Cabinet.
- 10.2. The general costs of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents, responding to consultations on neighbouring authorities' Plans, neighbourhood plans and Government consultations and the other activities identified in this report are met through existing revenue budgets or benefit from external funding or other arrangements to recover costs.
- 10.3. In previous financial years, funding has been available for local planning authorities (LPAs) in respect of neighbourhood planning. LPAs could claim £20,000 once a date has been set for a referendum following a successful examination. The [Government has announced](#) it will allow local planning authorities to submit claims for new burdens grants at an earlier point in the neighbourhood planning process in 2020/21. Claims will be able to be made when the Council announces its decision to send the plan to referendum.
- 10.4. The financial risks associated with planning were reviewed and updated as part of the budget-setting cycle for 2020/21. Risks are identified in relation to potential additional costs associated with progressing the Plan or any future challenge to it.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. Sustainable Development of the District and the Local Plan are both Corporate Risks. The Sustainable Development of the District has a sub-risk that covers the risks arising from the duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report. Future individual schemes or considerations may well be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need. Any risks and opportunities identified will also be subject to assessment for impact on those that share a protected characteristic.

### **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

### **14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

### **15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

15.1. There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report. Workload and vacancies are monitored on an on-going basis.

### **16. APPENDICES**

16.1. None

### **17. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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### **18. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18.1 None