

Item No	Referred from:	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6g	Date:	9 JANUARY 2024
	Title of item:	Local Plan Review
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda item 9

The report considered by O&S Committee at the meeting held on 9 January 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 9th January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet note the results of the review of the policies of the NHLP set out in Appendix A and the PAS toolkit in Appendix B.
- (2) That Cabinet agree that a full review and update of the NHLP is undertaken.
- (3) That work commences during 2024/25 on updating the technical studies needed to provide a robust evidence base to inform an update of the Local Plan and early community engagement take place.
- (4) That a further report on the detailed scope of the update and the timetable for its preparation, submission and examination is prepared at the earliest opportunity once the implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are better understood and the statutory framework required to implement the reforms has been approved.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that North Herts Council fulfils its commitments as set out in Policy IMR2 of the North Herts Local Plan which requires the Council to undertake a whole plan review by the end of 2023 to determine whether the plan needs to be updated either in whole or in part.

Audio Recording 25 minutes 48 seconds

The Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the item entitled 'Local Plan Review' and highlighted that:

- A comprehensive report had been produced with recommendations for a full review supported by the Executive Member and Deputy.
- It would be prudent to commence the full review using the new regulations.
- The Government had recently been discussing the levels of control Councils had creating their local plans.
- It had been 10 years since the current local plan had been created.
- The new plan would incorporate the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The review should proceed in a timely manner.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Nigel Mason

- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to questions the Deputy Executive Member for Planning and Transport advised:

- Any strategic sites currently progressing through planning would have a masterplan and where the Full Council agrees with the strategy, they would be unlikely to be rejected by Planning as the work will have been done up front.
- The growth bids mentioned at paragraph 10.3 and 10.4 related to the Council's own budgets.
- The majority of the review will be conducted by current staff.

In response to questions the Strategic Planning Manager advised:

- The local plan needed to be reviewed, paragraphs 9.4 and 9.5 of the report stated that any review of the local plan would not affect nor render the current local plan as out of date.
- Subject to the budget being approved the agreed budget for the review was £800K; significantly less than the £1.6M for the current local plan.
- There would be some specialist consultant work for complex matters. The remaining work would be completed using the current staff structure.

In response to a question the Principal Strategic Planning Officer advised that the aim was to reach examination by 2027 with a view to extending the plan period to 2046, ensuring compliance with the 15-year period required by national policy.

The Service Director – Regulatory stated that a number of growth bids had been put forward for consideration at the budget workshops relating to the delivery of the plan and staffing resources. Further instalment funding had been drafted into the budget for consultant fees, with the Executive Member and Deputy receiving regular resourcing updates.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths

Points raised in debate included:

- This review was important, and an early review was expected as so much had changed.
- Although previously against the local plan, a review of the plan would be good for the people of North Herts.
- The reforms had taken a considerable amount of time, a review should be started as soon as possible.
- There had been changes to policies and legislation since the last plan.
- Concerns had previously been raised when the local plan was adopted, they strongly welcomed a review.
- The 2011 plan was adopted in 2022, it could be argued that the plan was outdated as soon as it was adopted.
- Design policies should be considered to enhance sustainability and longevity.

Councillor David Levett proposed and Councillor Dominic Griffiths seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet note the results of the review of the policies of the NHLP set out in Appendix A and the PAS toolkit in Appendix B.
- (2) That Cabinet agree that a full review and update of the NHLP is undertaken.
- (3) That work commences during 2024/25 on updating the technical studies needed to provide a robust evidence base to inform an update of the Local Plan and early community engagement take place.
- (4) That a further report on the detailed scope of the update and the timetable for its preparation, submission and examination is prepared at the earliest opportunity once the implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are better understood and the statutory framework required to implement the reforms has been approved.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that North Herts Council fulfils its commitments as set out in Policy IMR2 of the North Herts Local Plan which requires the Council to undertake a whole plan review by the end of 2023 to determine whether the plan needs to be updated either in whole or in part.