



WORTHING BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Worthing Planning Committee
19 September 2018
Agenda Item 7

Key Decision [~~Yes~~/No]

Ward(s) Affected: ALL

Draft Worthing Local Plan - Proposed Consultation

Report by the Director for the Economy

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- A new Local Plan is being prepared to provide the development strategy for the Borough to 2033.
- This report presents the Draft Worthing Local Plan for consultation. It explains the background to the development of the Draft Plan; explains the stage that has now been reached; summarises the role and objectives of the Plan; sets out the key elements of its contents, and highlights the forthcoming consultation programme. It then sets out steps for progression of the Plan.
- The Draft Worthing Local Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1** The Planning Committee is recommended to consider the Officer's report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes make on the Draft Worthing Local Plan and the proposed work programme prior to consideration by the Joint Strategic Committee on the 9th October 2018.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Worthing Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and the intention was that it would help to guide development in the Borough until 2026. However, as explained in previous reports, it must be reviewed to reflect latest national policy,

particularly with regard to how Councils now need to plan for housing. As such, the Council has committed to replace the Core Strategy with a new Local Plan for the Borough.

- 1.2. The new Local Plan, which will look ahead to 2033, needs to balance the benefits of 'growth' against the potential impact of future development and the need to protect the environment. To do this it will:
 - ❑ Aim to meet the objectively assessed development and infrastructure needs where possible and guide to the most appropriate areas
 - ❑ Identify land where development would be inappropriate
 - ❑ Contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.
- 1.3. To ensure that the Local Plan is found sound when scrutinised at Examination it must conform to national guidance and legislation. In particular, Local Plans should be consistent with the principles and policies set out the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The first version of the NPPF, that was published in 2012, has helped to inform the draft Local Plan. However, more recently, in July 2018, the Government published its revised NPPF. Although further work will be required in the coming months to address some of the new / amended requirements Officers do not see this as being a reason to delay this stage of consultation. This is because the vast majority of the key changes made at the national level recently formed part of earlier consultation documents published by the Government. Therefore, the work that was undertaken to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan was, where appropriate, able to react to the emerging (now adopted) guidance published at the national level.
- 1.4. Local Plans must also be based on robust local evidence. Therefore, to inform the new Local Plan work has focussed on updating key parts of the Council's evidence base to better understand the needs, opportunities and constraints within the Borough.
- 1.5. The views of interested parties form another key component of the evidence base and the first key stage of consultation (the Issues and Options stage) was undertaken in summer 2016. Previous reports have summarised the comments that were received and the Draft Local Plan indicates where, and how, previous responses have influenced the emerging strategy and policies.
- 1.6. This Draft Worthing Local Plan is prepared under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. It is important to note that this is a consultation document which sets out the Council's proposed

strategy - it is not the final version. Interested parties will be invited to make comment on all elements of the Plan, and as explained further below, this (along with further evidence) will help to influence revisions that will be made to the Plan before it is submitted for examination.

2. Evidence Base

- 2.1. A range of technical evidence has contributed to the development of the draft Local Plan, including work on infrastructure capacity, sustainability, transport, retail needs, infrastructure, flood risk, housing need & capacity; and landscape & biodiversity assessments. The studies can be found on the Council's website.
- 2.2. Key evidence findings relating to landscape, retail, employment and housing need have been summarised for Members in previous reports and at a number of workshops. More recently, the Worthing Local Plan Transport Study has been prepared by a specialist consultant in liaison with West Sussex County Council and other partners. The assessment provides a transport evidence base which demonstrates the traffic implications of the proposed new land use development. In summary, the assessment demonstrates that the effects of the Local Plan proposals are limited in transport terms and the sites being taken forward can be delivered without significant detrimental impact upon the performance of the transport network. A transport improvement package has been identified to support the delivery of the Local Plan proposals, mitigate any potential residual impacts, and provide wider benefits to existing residents within the Borough.

3. Draft Local Plan Format

- 3.1. The draft Worthing Local Plan is divided into 4 parts:

Part 1 - Introduction & Context This sets out the purpose of the Plan; the area covered by the Plan; a summary of the evidence base; the key characteristics of the Borough; and a summary of the key issues and challenges. Finally, the section establishes a Vision for what kind of town Worthing aspires to be by 2033 and a set of Strategic Objectives (Social, Economic and Environmental) that provide the direction for the spatial strategy and policies for the plan area.

Part 2 - Spatial Strategy This summarises the national, sub-regional and local planning context; focuses on the strategic issues; explains how the housing and development targets for Worthing have been prepared; and explains why and how some land outside of the existing Built Up Area boundary is to be protected from development.

Part 3 - Development Sites For all development sites included within the consultation draft this section provides detailed information including site description, site constraints and development requirements. The sites that have been shown to have some development potential are broken down into the following three categories:

- i) Allocations - development considered to be deliverable within 5 years
- ii) Areas of Change - sites with longer term development potential
- iii) Omission sites - sites with some development potential but it still needs to be demonstrated that existing constraints can be overcome.

Part 4 - Core Policies These are the policies that, along with the other components of the Plan, will help to inform how planning applications are determined.

- 3.2 The principles embedded within the spatial strategy were set out, and subsequently endorsed, in a report to Joint Strategic Committee in April 2017 which highlighted the limited amount of options available to test. In summary, the proposed strategy seeks to achieve a balance between planning positively to meet the town's development needs with the continuing need to protect and enhance the borough's high quality environments. Therefore, the overarching objective for the plan is to provide a clear direction that will place a strong emphasis on regeneration and maximise appropriate development on brownfield land while adding sustainable greenfield urban extensions adjacent to the existing urban areas. Ultimately, this approach will help to steer new development to the right locations whilst helping to protect areas of greatest sensitivity / value.
- 3.3 The draft Local Plan, when published for consultation, will be supported by the publication of all up-to-date evidence. In addition, the following documents will be published alongside the draft Plan:
 - Sustainability Appraisal
 - Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 - Duty to Co-operate Overview
 - Housing Implementation Strategy
 - Consultation and Progress Statement
 - Map extracts (to illustrate where key changes are proposed to the existing Core Strategy Proposals Map)
- 3.4 It is acknowledged that the draft Local Plan is quite lengthy. However, to provide a clear understanding as to how the Plan has been prepared, at this stage it is important that the context and background that supports the spatial strategy and associated policies is fully explained. The length of the document will be reduced

at the next stage of Local Plan preparation as some of the detail that is currently included within the Plan will be taken out and incorporated within supporting Topic Papers.

4. Key Issues

Calculating Housing Need

- 4.1 During the preparation of the Draft Local Plan the Government has made a number of revisions to how housing need should be calculated. These changes have (to date) all resulted in a higher figure of need for the Borough some of which have been very significant. As an example, the introduction of the Standard Methodology for calculating need resulted in an 'overnight' increase in the level of housing need for Worthing of over 3,000 dwellings over the Plan period.
- 4.2 In this regard, it should be noted that the figure used for the Worthing Local Plan uses the latest published methodology and associated demographic data. However, it is important to note that the whilst the Government has used the revised NPPF (July 2018) to confirm the Standard Methodology they have also indicated that they will consider 'adjusting' the current method after the next set of household projections are released in September. If necessary, and providing there is sufficient time to react, officers will amend the figures relating to housing need prior to the consultation document being published.
- 4.3 For some local authorities a fluctuation (either up or down) in levels of housing need would have significant implications for their spatial strategy and the sites being taken forward in the respective Local Plans. As further explained below, this is not the case for Worthing. The reality is that, despite the draft Plan taking a positive approach to development, the lack of opportunities for growth in and around the town means that the level of housing provided through the Plan will never meet the levels of need identified. As a consequence, any change to the levels of housing need is unlikely to influence the overall development strategy as the Draft Plan is already seeking to maximise development and deliver all of the remaining opportunities that have been shown to be sustainable and deliverable.

Housing Capacity

- 4.4 The draft Local Plan proposes a strategy that would delivery a minimum of 4,232 dwellings between 2016 to 2033. This is a 'capacity-based' housing target based on the level of housing that can be delivered within the Plan period, having regard to the identified constraints and potential development capacity.

- 4.5 This level of housing delivery equates to a minimum housing target of 249 homes per annum to be achieved by 2033. This is a target that is significantly higher (approximately 25%) than the levels of growth planned for within the Worthing Core Strategy. It is a challenging but realistic level of housing development that takes a positive approach to the allocation of sustainable sites whilst also providing the appropriate balance between meeting development needs and protecting the environment and character of the borough.
- 4.6 However, it is abundantly clear that, despite taking a positive approach to development (including the 'early' release of the second phase of the West Durrington development), the delivery rate for housing will fall significantly below the levels of housing need identified (currently 15,241 dwellings over the Plan period). Approximately 28% of the overall housing need will be met and that this would result in a shortfall in housing delivery over the Plan period of approximately 11,000 dwellings.
- 4.7 As Members will be aware, there is great pressure on local authorities to prepare Plans that support sustainable growth and seek to meet identified needs, particularly the needs for housing. It is acknowledged that the level of shortfall between housing needs in Worthing and the level of development planned for within the Draft Local Plan is very significant. However, the NPPF is clear in that whilst Local Plan should strive to meet development needs unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits. To inform this 'balance' local authorities must take account of the different roles and character of their area. In this regard, officers are of the view that very strong evidence is in place that demonstrates the lack of land availability and other constraints that limit the potential for significant growth in and around Worthing. As a consequence, the reality is that local housing needs will never be met. This places a great emphasis on working with neighbouring authorities under the duty to co-operate (see below).

Protected Areas Outside Built Up Area

- 4.8 Although Worthing is primarily an urban area it does contain important open areas including the South Downs to the north, small amounts of undeveloped coast to the south and gaps between settlements to the west and east. In addition, as the population density of Worthing increases the demand for and use of parks and open spaces throughout the borough will increase. The draft Plan seeks to protect and enhance these assets and promote health and well-being in our communities.

- 4.9 The spatial strategy seeks to manage the pattern of development by identifying the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB) within which development can be sustainably located. To provide for a level of development the Plan does propose that the BUAB is extended to allow for the allocation some edge of town sites. However, to ensure that the most valued and sensitive land/seascapes are protected, and that the existing character of Worthing is maintained, all land outside the revised BUAB will be designated as countryside and undeveloped coast to protect landscape and coastal character including its environmental and recreational value. In addition, some areas outside the BUAB will also be designated as:
- Local Gap - to preserve Worthing's character and identity by preventing settlement coalescence; and/or
 - Local Green Space - to protect green areas of particular importance to the local communities they serve.
- 4.10 The three most significant areas that are proposed as Local Gaps and Local Green Spaces are Brooklands to the east of the borough and the two gaps to the west (Chatsmore Farm and the Goring-Ferring Gap). The Landscape and Ecology Study of edge of town development opportunities supports the retention of these areas as gaps.
- 4.11 The NPPF (2012) introduced Local Green Space designation as a mechanism for local communities to identify and protect green spaces which are of particular importance to them, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or wildlife. Existing evidence and specific work undertaken by the Council's landscape consultants found that these three areas met the NPPF criteria for designation as Local Green Spaces and the justification for this is set out in Plan.
- 4.12 In summary, the draft Plan seeks to use these designations to provide the long term protection for the most significant undeveloped areas on either side of the borough. Inevitably, the proposed protection of this land will be closely scrutinised, particularly given the level of unmet housing need and the promotion of the Goring gaps for development by the landowner. Whilst the potential to deliver a level of development on these sites has been positively explored officers are of the view that the evidence gathered provides strong justification as to why these important and valued breaks in development should be protected.

Duty to Co-operate

- 4.13 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy the Council has been working with other local authorities across the sub-region to address strategic priorities (including how objectively assessed development needs can best be met). This has allowed for consideration of where unmet needs might be met and has helped to respond to the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate which is a legal duty placed on local authorities to address cross-boundary issues. Given the level of housing need identified in neighbouring areas and the significant constraints to growth across the sub-region, the reality is that there is currently very limited potential for other local authorities to meet some of Worthing's unmet need. However, the Council will continue to work with all relevant parties to ensure that all opportunities are fully explored and this work will include the preparation of the Local Strategic Statement 3 prepared by the West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1 Formal and informal stages of consultation with the public and all relevant stakeholders are integral to the development of a new Local Plan. Engagement undertaken to date has included: the Issues and Options consultation (2016); several workshops for elected Members; ongoing engagement with infrastructure and service providers; and a number of 'calls for sites' (when landowners and developers are asked to put forward land that may have some development potential).
- 5.2 It is proposed that the Draft Worthing Local Plan will be made available for a six week consultation period from the end of October to mid December. As a minimum, consultation will be undertaken in line with the Joint Adur and Worthing Statement of Community Involvement (Dec 2012). Many of the successful methods utilised successfully at the Issues and Options stage will be repeated - this will include the use of social-media, posters, summary leaflets and drop-in sessions when Officers will be available to respond to any questions.
- 5.3 Planning Policy Officers will work closely with Members of the Local Plan Working Group and the Council's communication team in the coming weeks to agree and finalise the consultation process.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Following consultation, the responses submitted on the draft Plan will be analysed and reported to Members. This alongside further evidence will help to

influence the drafting of the next versions on the Plan. This will include work to respond to the revised NPPF, a whole plan viability assessment and updates to existing evidence (e.g. flood risk, housing need, retail, the economy and open space). Following this a formal, 'submission' version of the plan will be published (anticipated in summer 2019). A statutory period of consultation will follow (Regulation 19), during which interested parties can comment as to whether the Plan meets the 'tests of soundness' as set out in the NPPF. These relate to whether the Plan is: positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy. Following this the Plan will be submitted for formal Examination (anticipated towards end of 2019). This could result in adoption of the Worthing Local Plan by spring 2020.

- 6.2 A new Local Development Scheme (the Council's 3-year work programme for Planning Policy) will be prepared early in 2019 following the close of the consultation period. In part, the level of response received and the significance of the issues raised will influence the timetable for the progression of the Local Plan to adoption.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are some significant costs attached to the progression of a new Local Plan. Most of these costs relate to the evidence base required to make informed decisions within the Plan but there are also costs associated with consultation stages and the Examination. The production of the Local Plan is to be funded by the existing service budget.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Worthing Local Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and 2012, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Localism Act 2011. The Plan should be subject to Sustainability Appraisal, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The plan should comply with national policies except where indicated.

Legal Officer: Edwina Adefehinti

Date: 6.8.18

Background Papers

- Report to Joint Strategic Committee (04/04/17)
- Worthing Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation Document (and associated reports)

- Worthing Core Strategy 2011
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Platforms for Our Places

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- A new Local Plan will establish an up to date planning framework for Worthing which will help to prioritise areas for growth. The Plan will provide a clear platform for the future development of our places which will help to deliver a number of economic priorities.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- An adopted planning framework will help to underpin a clear regulatory service for development management and meet future housing and community needs.

2.2 Equality Issues

- The Plan has been the subject of an Equalities Impact Assessment. It will aim to ensure that all groups in Worthing have equal access to the spatial opportunities offered by the new Development Plan. For example, the provision of affordable housing and sustainable transport initiatives are key issues to be addressed through the new plan to help promote equal opportunities.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- The emerging Local Plan considers community safety issues and requires development to incorporate the principles of securing safety and reducing crime through design in order to create a safe and secure environment.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

- An up to date plan will help to balance the pressure to develop / grow with the protection of key environmental assets.

4. Governance

- A new Local Plan will help to meet a number of the Council's priorities, action plans, and policies.
- The delivery of a new Local Plan will help to meet the spatial needs of the Borough and therefore have a positive impact on the reputation of the Council.
- Failure to adopt a new Plan could impact on a number of this Council's priorities including economic and social regeneration.
- Failure to get a new Development Plan in place in a timely manner may impact on local control when determining applications and increase the risk of speculative development proposals.