

Report to Cabinet

22 March 2018

By the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development

DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham
District
Council**

Not Exempt

Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation Draft – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development

Executive Summary

This report seeks approval for the publication of the first stage in the Local Plan Review, the Issues and Options – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development for a seven week period of consultation, between 6 April 2018 and 25 May 2018. A Sustainability Appraisal will be prepared alongside the Local Plan Review. The first stage will be the publication of a Scoping Report at the same time as the Issues and Options consultation document. The Issues and Options consultation document would not form Council policy.

In November 2015, the Council adopted the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). Outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP), this document sets out the Council's planning strategy to 2031 to deliver the sustainable development, balancing the social, economic and environmental needs of the plan area.

The adopted HDPF provides a sound basis for managing change and development in the district in the short to medium term but it is necessary to review the HDPF because it is a requirement that Local Plans are monitored and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are kept up-to-date. Furthermore, the Inspector who undertook the independent examination of the HDPF concluded that more work would be needed by the Council to ensure that sufficient land was made available to meet the needs of businesses and to support economic growth. He also indicated that a review of the plan should commence within three years; by the end of 2018.

This first part of the Local Plan Review considers both the locational strategy for economic growth and sets out a number of sites which may have the potential for allocation as employment sites and considers some of the existing policies set out in the Economic Development chapter (chapter 5) of the HDPF.

It also considers how the Council can achieve sustainable development in the more rural parts of Horsham district. It considers policies in a few of the chapters of the HDPF, but particularly relates to development that takes place outside existing defined built-up area boundaries, which has been identified as an issue that needs to be addressed through the neighbourhood planning process.

In addition to the topics discussed in this first Issues and Options consultation document, a wide range of other issues will need to be considered when reviewing the plan and rolling it forward to 2036, including the development strategy for housing development. The

Government is revising its guidance on this issue and further evidence will need to be prepared. It is therefore anticipated that the next stage in the Local Plan review will be published in 2019, which will be subject to further consultation.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended that:

- i) The draft Local Plan Review Issues and Options – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development be published for a seven week period of consultation from 6 April 2018 to 25 May 2018.
- ii) The Cabinet Member for Planning and Development has delegated authority to agree the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and any necessary minor editorial changes to the Local Plan Review Issues and Options document.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) It is both necessary and appropriate to invite public and stakeholder participation in the preparation of a new planning document for the district.
- ii) In order to ensure that the consultation documentation is accurately prepared. Any significant changes to the draft document would need to be reported back to Cabinet for approval before publication for consultation.

Background Papers

Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation Draft – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development, March 2018 version for Cabinet

Draft Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), Employment Chapter, April 2018

Visitor Economy Strategy 2018-2023

Horsham District Economic Strategy 2017-2017

Hotel and Visitor Accommodation Study, July 2016

Employment Floorspace Review, June 2016

Horsham District Planning Framework, November 2015

Economic Growth Assessment. April 2014

Wards affected: All

Contact:

Dr Chris Lyons, Director of Planning, Economic Development & Property ext 5401

Barbara Childs, Head of Strategic Planning ext 5181

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In November 2015, the Council adopted the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). Outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP), this document sets out the Council's planning strategy to 2031 to deliver the sustainable development, balancing the social, economic and environmental needs of the plan area.
- 1.2 The adopted HDPF provides a sound basis for managing change and development in the district in the short to medium term but it is necessary to review the HDPF because it is a requirement that Local Plans are monitored and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are kept up-to-date. Furthermore, the Inspector who undertook the independent examination of the HDPF concluded that more work would be needed by the Council to ensure that sufficient land was made available to meet the needs of businesses and to support economic growth. He also indicated that a review of the plan should commence within three years; by the end of 2018.
- 1.3 The draft Issues and Options document forms the first part of the review of the HDPF and the preparation of the new Horsham District Local Plan, which will run from 2018 to 2036. This first part of the review will consider the strategy for economic development in the District; both the locational strategy for economic growth and sites which may have the potential for allocation for employment use. It also considers how the Council can achieve sustainable development in the more rural parts of the district and particularly relates to development that takes place outside existing defined built-up area boundaries which has been identified as an issue that needs to be addressed through the neighbourhood planning process.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 Local Plan Review Issues and Options – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development document is the first stage in preparing a planning strategy to replace the current adopted Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015).

3 Details

- 3.1 Since the adoption of the HDPF, the Council has developed a wider corporate Economic Strategy for the period 2017-2027. It recognises that Horsham District Council has a key role in driving economic growth and in creating conditions that support the local economy, and remove barriers that stop businesses creating jobs
- 3.2 The Issues and Options document proposes a revised strategy for economic development albeit that it continues a number of the existing principles that are in the HDPF where they have been found to be working well, such as continuing to support redevelopment, regeneration and intensification and smart growth of existing employment sites. The Issues and Options document reviews the Key Employment Area boundaries for example, which protect sites for employment use. It also proposes new Key Employment Areas.

- 3.3 It is clear that additional land is required for the provision of employment in order to meet the needs of both existing and future business in the District and to support the economy of the wider sub-region. A number of sites are identified in the Issues and Options document that have potential for employment development. Some of these sites are located on the strategic road network outside existing settlements. If allocated this would result in a change from the existing locational strategy for employment use within and adjacent to the most sustainable settlements but seems to more closely reflect the desires of the business community. This is an important area for consultation as part of the Local Plan Review.
- 3.4 The visitor economy needs to be sustained and the Issues and Options document looks to review the current tourism policy in the HDPF to better reflect the more recent work including on the Visitor Economy Strategy 2018-2023 and Hotel and Visitor Accommodation Study, July 2016.
- 3.5 Although most of the population in Horsham District live and work in towns and villages in the District, the vast majority of the land area is countryside. The rural environment does however provide a place of work or a place to live for an important section of our community. These include farmers, rural workers, plant nurseries, small commercial centres, tourism and leisure. Not only do many of these businesses contribute to the economy in their own right, but they also help protect the leafy character of the district, and the important services that it offers (such as flood attenuation and carbon storage), which also support the economy of the rest of the District and help to make it an attractive place to live and work.
- 3.6 The Issues and Options document does not seek to rewrite the policies of the HDPF which are currently working well in helping to protect the countryside from inappropriate development. It does however, review the Built-Up Area Boundaries to take into account recent developments and any other anomalies and proposes a new categorisation of 'secondary settlements'. These are areas where there are small services and facilities, such as a local shop, village hall or primary school where a small amount of infill development may be considered acceptable.
- 3.7 If these policy provisions are taken forward in the Local Plan Review, land outside Built-Up Area Boundaries and secondary settlements would generally not be supported. The Issues and Options document then examines further existing policies for rural workers and rural economic development and the potential for a new policy for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings to other uses.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Issues and Options document is published for a seven week consultation between Friday 6 April and 25 May 2018 in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 All representations that are submitted will be summarised and suggested changes will be considered by Cabinet at the next stage in the preparation of the plan. This could include evidence updates or further work on proposed sites or consideration of new land that could be proposed to the Council as part of the consultation.

- 4.3 In addition to the topics discussed in this first Issues and Options consultation document, a wide range of other issues will need to be considered, including the development strategy for housing development. The Government is revising its guidance on this issue and further evidence will need to be prepared. It is therefore anticipated that the next stage in the Local Plan review will be published in 2019, which will be subject to further consultation. This documentation will be accompanied by updated evidence base documents including a sustainability appraisal and a habitats regulation assessment. The timetable and the future steps in the preparation of the Local Plan review will be set out in the Local Development Statement, which will be published on the Council's website

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The proposed content of this document was discussed at the Planning and Development Policy Development Advisory Group on 8 March 2018. Members of the group supported the proposed approach to publish the Local Plan Review Issues and Options - Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development document for consultation.
- 5.2 An all Member Seminar was held in June 2017 which debated the proposed economic and rural strategies. Member's views were taken into account in the preparation of the Local Plan Review Issues and options – Employment, Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development document.
- 5.3 All Parish Councils that have potential employment sites within their area have been consulted and their views taken into account in preparing the draft Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), Employment Chapter, which will be published alongside the Local Plan Review Issues and Options document.
- 5.4 The district Council organised Agent's Forum has also debated the need, merits and potential content of an agricultural and rural building conversion policy at its meetings in September 2017 and January 2018. These views have been taken in to account in the preparation of the draft policy included in the Local Plan Review Issues and Options document.
- 5.5 The Monitoring Officer had no comments.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 An alternative course of action would be not to review the Horsham District Planning Framework but it is a requirement that local plans are monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that they are kept up-to-date.
- 6.2 The Inspector who undertook the independent examination of the HDPF concluded that further work would be needed by the Council to identify the future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (which is being addressed in a separate site allocation document) and ensure that sufficient land was made available to meet the needs of businesses and support economic growth. He also

indicated that a review of the plan commence within three years to ensure that wider long term needs in the District could be met.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report in addition to those which have already been identified, which are the normal staff and publication costs associated with the publication of this document for consultation. It will be necessary to appoint consultants to assist with specific specialist studies from time to time.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 This document will meet the Council's stated intention to review its adopted Local Plan (the Horsham District Planning Framework).
- 8.2 If agreed for consultation, the consultation will need to be undertaken in accordance with the Town And Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and in particular Regulation 18. In addition a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report incorporating the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 has been undertaken as part of this work

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 With the preparation of any Development Plan Document, there is a risk that the process could be subject to a Judicial Review on the adoption of the plan. By following the required legal processes as set out in the relevant legislation the risk of a successful challenge is considered to be low.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 There are no direct crime and disorder consequences arising from the content of this report. The preparation of a Local Plan Review and the involvement of the community at each stage, will potentially contribute to improving the quality of life in the district and will therefore have a positive impact on human rights.