



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	19 September 2017
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	DACORUM LOCAL PLAN REVIEW
Contact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration • James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration • Laura Wood, Team Leader – Strategic Planning and Regeneration (Strategic Planning)
Purpose of report:	To agree the Local Plan Issues and Option document for consultation.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet recommend to Council that :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Local Plan Issues and Options document is agreed for consultation; 2. The content of the Sustainability Appraisal Working Note is agreed as part of the Issues and Options consultation; and 3. Authority is delegated to the Assistant Director for Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder, to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) agree detailed consultation arrangements; and (b) Make any minor changes to the documents referred to in recommendations 1 and 2 before they are finally published.
Corporate objectives:	<p>The scope of the Local Plan means that once finalised it will help support all 5 corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A clean, safe and enjoyable environment:</i> contains requirements relating to the design and layout of new development sites that help promote security and safe access. • <i>Building strong and vibrant communities:</i> - provides a

	<p>framework for local communities to prepare area-specific guidance such as Neighbourhood Plans etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity:-</i> allocates and protects land for uses that provide employment opportunities. • <i>Providing good quality affordable homes:-</i> sets out how the Borough's overall housing target will be met, together with requirements for affordable homes. • <i>Delivering an efficient and modern Council –</i> by helping to provide a clear framework upon which planning decisions can be made.
<p>Implications:</p>	<p><u>Financial:</u> The process of preparing the new Local Plan has financial implications. The Council has baselined the funding required by allocating £300k per annum into the ongoing annual revenue budget. This figure is based on the historic three year average expenditure that has been incurred when preparing the previous iteration of planning documents (the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs).</p> <p>The historic reserve that has been used to smooth expenditure peaks and troughs is anticipated to be completely used by the end of 2017/18 once the remaining £38k has been drawn down.</p> <p>Having an up to date planning policy framework through the statutory Local Plan helps reduce the incidence of planning appeals (and thus costs associated with those). It will also be the most effective way of ensuring the optimum level of developer contributions to infrastructure and therefore mitigation of development impacts can be achieved.</p> <p><u>'Value for Money'</u> The Council has achieved, and will continue to achieve, 'value for money' by preparing joint technical studies to support the content of the new Local Plan where possible.</p>
<p>Risk Implications</p>	<p>A full risk assessment has been carried out as part of the PID for the Local Planning Framework. These risks are reviewed monthly through ROCKET and reported each year through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The progress of the Local Plan will be monitored monthly through the Corporate Growth and Infrastructure Group which includes the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources. Identified risks include failure of external agencies or consultants to deliver on time, change in Government policy and team capacity. Risks of not progressing the plan review include the likelihood of a significant increase in speculative planning applications (and potentially appeals), particularly for housing development in the Green Belt, which would prove hard to defend. There would also be financial implications i.e. extra costs associated with planning appeals and inquiries.</p>

	Risks continue to be minimised through the continued use of a specialist external legal adviser, as necessary.
Community Impact Assessment	A Community Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment are currently being prepared. The independent Sustainability Appraisal Working Note which accompanies the Issues and Options paper concludes that this first stage of the plan-making process avoids any discrimination on the basis of disability, gender or ethnic minority.
Health and Safety Implications	None.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer:</p> <p>The Local Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework and must be prepared in accordance with statutory processes. These include conformity with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>This process would ensure the Council complies with its legal requirements to keep the Local Plan up-to-date, including complying with the Core Strategy Inspector's requirement for 'early partial review'.</p> <p>Deputy S.151 Officer:</p> <p>The costs of going out to consultation are allowed for within approved revenue budgets. Any further financial impacts will come from any individual subsequent planning decisions.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Consultation on the new Local Plan will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This reflects the requirements set out by Government within the relevant planning regulations.</p> <p>Some initial informal consultation has already taken place with Members and key stakeholders. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing for Borough Councillors; • Briefing for Town and Parish Councils (with separate briefings for Tring and Berkhamsted Town Councils); • Meetings with infrastructure providers; • Discussions with HCC education department regarding implications of different growth scenarios on school capacities; and • Duty to Co-operate meetings with adjoining local authorities. • Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration. • Corporate Management Team • Senior Officers through the Corporate Growth and Infrastructure Group. <p>The Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder has also been separately briefed regarding the specific content of the Issues and Options document.</p>

Background papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (April 2004) • National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). • Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). • Core Strategy DPD (September 2013) • Site Allocations DPD (July 2017) • Statement of Community Involvement (July 2016) • Local Development Scheme 2016-18 (January 2016), with associated timetable update (December 2016). • Housing White Paper (February 2017) ('Fixing the Broken Housing Market') • Technical studies – as listed at http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/technical-work-for-the-early-partial-review 	
Glossary of terms and any other acronyms used in this report	DPD InDP LDS NPPF PPG SCI SPD SPG DBLP	Development Plan Document Infrastructure Delivery Plan Local Development Scheme National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Statement of Community Involvement Supplementary Planning Document Supplementary Planning Guidance Dacorum Borough Local Plan

BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All Councils are required by law to produce a Local Plan and keep it up to date. Dacorum's current Local Plan is made up of the following:
- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted September 2013);
 - Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted July 2017); and
 - 'Saved' parts of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (adopted May 2004); and
- 1.2 These written documents are accompanied by a Policies Map which shows the boundaries of the allocations and designations set by the planning policies.
- 1.3 As Cabinet will be aware, in finding the Core Strategy to be 'sound,' the Planning Inspector required the Council to agree to carry out an 'early partial review' of this document. This review should look again at:
- (a) Household projections;
 - (b) The role and function of the Green Belt affecting Dacorum, including long-term boundaries and the potential to safeguard land beyond 2031; and
 - (c) The role that effective co-operation with local planning authorities could play in meeting any housing needs arising from Dacorum. This element will include St Albans District and relevant areas lying beyond the Green Belt.

- 1.4 The Local Development Scheme (LDS), adopted in December 2015, sets out the scope and programme for this review process. The timetable within it was updated in December 2016. It clarifies that this review will merge the existing Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs and incorporate a series of new Development Management policies into a new single 'Local Plan' for Dacorum Borough. As Government requires Local Plans to cover a 15 year period (measured from the date of their adoption), this new plan will cover the period to 2036.
- 1.5 It is very important to continue to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place. Without this document the control that the Council would have over the location of new development and the provision of infrastructure would be greatly reduced. Sites could also be promoted for development in locations that the Council and its communities want to protect.

2. ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Scope of document

- 2.1 The first formal stage of consultation on a new Local Plan is the 'Issues and Options.' As its title suggests, this sets out the planning issues that face the area over the next 20 years and broad options for how they could be addressed.
- 2.2 The greatest challenge for the new Local Plan relates to the rising demand and requirement for new housing. The main focus of this document is therefore to explore the growth needs in Dacorum and how far these needs should be met. This includes setting out the principles we propose to use when choosing broad locations for new development. The detail of the actual development sites and planning policies will evolve as the new Local Plan progresses.
- 2.3 The document is divided into three main parts:
 - 1) A vision for the new Local Plan, accompanied by a series of high level objectives;
 - 2) A summary of the main issues facing Dacorum when planning for growth; and
 - 3) A discussion on how this future growth could be accommodated.
- 2.4 Issues are grouped under the headings of: 'Our towns, villages and countryside'; 'Homes'; 'Jobs'; 'Our environment'; and 'Infrastructure'. This is followed by a separate section putting forward 7 potential growth scenarios. These relate to three levels of growth (below housing need; housing need and above housing need) and three potential growth distributions (focus on the three towns, focus at Hemel Hempstead; and a more even distribution of growth across the Borough). A 'suggested growth option' is then put forward, which includes a little more detail regarding the potential sites that could help make up this scenario, but there is a clear caveat that final decisions have yet to be taken.
- 2.5 Feedback is sought through the consultation on each issue and growth option raised through a series of "yes / no" questions, with the opportunity for respondents to explain the reasons for their answers.

- 2.6 The draft consultation document includes a suggested growth option. Officers recommend that it is included for a number of reasons:
- (a) It ensures residents, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders are aware of the implications of meeting local housing needs in terms of the impact on the Green Belt;
 - (b) It provides a clear opportunity for feedback to be given on the suggested Green Belt housing sites that make up the suggested option;
 - (c) It provides a basis for discussions to begin with infrastructure providers regarding how a particular level and distribution of growth could be delivered, rather than trying to discuss what are often quite locally-specific issues in more general terms;
 - (d) It makes the transition from a 'pure' Issues and Options document to a full draft plan (at the Pre-Submission stage) less dramatic and opens up the ability for more meaningful engagement and responses on the challenges associated with growth;
 - (e) It speeds up the plan-preparation process by removing the need for a separate 'Preferred Options Stage' (which is no longer required by Government regulations); and
 - (f) It provides a meaningful basis through which to engage with adjoining Councils regarding cross boundary issues and how best to take these forward.
- 2.7 The sites that make up this suggested option have been chosen based on a combination of factors. This includes an initial assessment of the degree to which they adhere to the locational principles set out within section 10 of the consultation document; the ability for them to be supported by existing services or facilities, or to provide new services and facilities on-site; the benefits they could bring to an area in addition to new homes; and conclusions of technical work, including the Green Belt Study and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. These factors are all summarised within a draft Schedule of Site Appraisals.
- 2.7 The consultation document does however make it clear that these locations are currently suggestions only, and the final sites chosen for the plan will be taken once feedback from this consultation has been received and further assessment work carried out – particularly in terms of the outcome of updating the SHMA in terms of housing growth, local infrastructure needs and capacities.

Context

- 2.8 Local Plans cannot however be prepared in isolation. The Government requires them to be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policies and guidance.
- 2.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the main context for local plans. The content of the NPPF is due to be revised shortly, to reflect changes suggested within the 2017 Housing White Paper ('Fixing the Broken Housing Market'). Further details regarding how Government wishes Councils to address issues within their Local Plans is set out in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and . additional topic-based guidance as appropriate.

- 2.10 There are also a wide range of documents prepared on a county or local level which need to be taken into account when preparing the Local Plan. These include:
- Perfectly Placed for Business (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership);
 - Local Transport Plan;
 - Waste and Minerals Plans
 - South West Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan (emerging);
 - Chilterns AONB Management Plan; and
 - Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 2.11 As well as working with partners and stakeholders, the Council has already started collecting and producing the evidence that will inform the content of the Local Plan. This includes studies on key topics such as the need for new homes, shops and jobs. It will be expanded as the new Local Plan progresses, but has helped identify key issues, challenges and options within the document. Details of the evidence that has influenced thinking on each section is signposted at the end of each relevant section. All documents prepared by the Borough Council are on our website via www.dacorum.gov.uk/planningpolicy.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.12 The Issues and Options document is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which Cabinet is also requested to agree for consultation. This has been undertaken by Consultants TRL on behalf of the Council and incorporates the requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as well as considering the issues of equality and diversity (note that this remains a legal requirement)
- 2.13 The SA assesses the Issues and Options document against a range of social, environmental and economic indicators and helps to identify all the likely significant effects. It then advises on ways in which any adverse effects could be avoided, reduced or mitigated and how any positive effects could be maximised. This helps us to ensure that the emerging policies, plans and allocations in the new Local Plan will promote sustainable development.
- 2.14 There will also be the need to undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening, but this will be undertaken to inform the next stage (Pre-Submission) of the new plan, when precise development sites and planning policies are firmed up. The role of the HRA is to assess whether the new Local Plan could affect the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and if so, advise how this can be mitigated.

Consultation arrangements

- 2.15 Arrangements for consulting on Local Plan documents are set out in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). In accordance with these requirements (which in turn reflect those set out within Government regulations), the consultation will run for 6 weeks and will be publicised through:
- A formal notice in the local paper(s);
 - Press release;
 - Information on the Council's website;

- Direct notification by letter or email to everyone on the Council's Local Plan database; and
 - An article in the October edition of the Digital Digest email.
- 2.16 An article in the Autumn 2017 edition of the Dacorum Digest (distributed across the Borough from 14 August and covers the period to mid November) will give residents early notification of the consultation, and signpost them to the website for further information.
- 2.17 Consultation documents will be made available online and at the Council Offices and libraries. Officers will be available throughout the period to respond to questions arising. It is also intended to hold a staffed exhibition in each of the Borough's town and large villages, to provide an opportunity for residents and other interested parties to discuss the Issues and Options document directly with Officers and Members. These exhibitions would logically be held mid-way through the consultation period, when attendees have had sufficient opportunity to consider the content of the Issues and Options document, whilst still have time left to respond before the deadline. The times and locations of the exhibitions will be advertised through an advert in the local paper(s), together with information on the website and posters at the venues.
- 2.18 Provisional dates for the consultation are 18th October to 29th November, with the exhibitions held during w/c 6th November (venue availability permitting). It is however recommended that detailed consultation arrangements are delegated to the Assistant Director for Planning and Development to finalise, in consultation with the Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder.

Duty to Co-operate

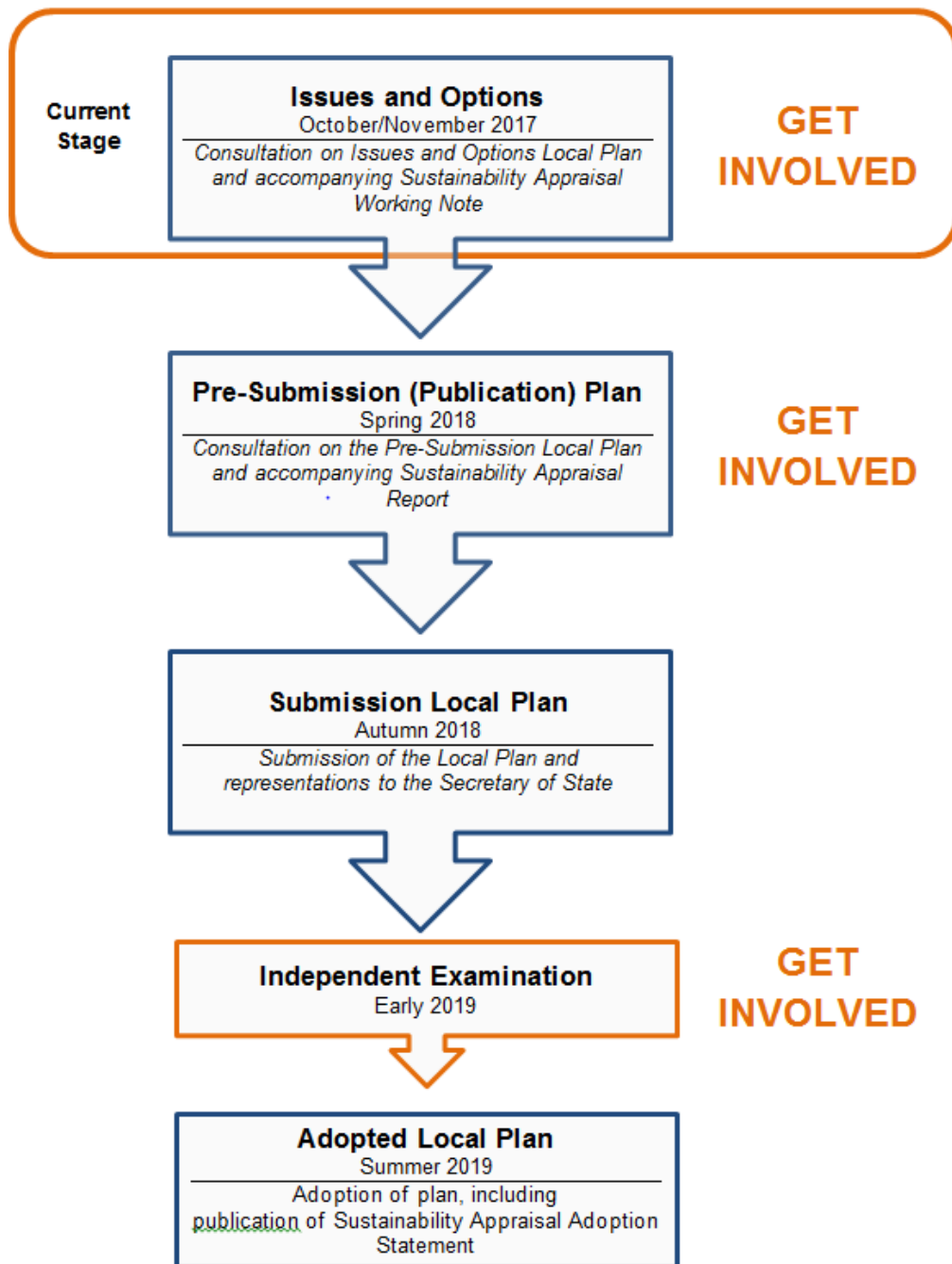
- 2.19 In advance of this formal Issues and Options consultation, Officers have also held a number of meetings, or had email correspondence, with specified Duty-to-Co-operate (DtC) bodies. These include Town and Parish Councils, infrastructure providers, adjoining local authorities and the County Council. The outcomes of this liaison have helped shape the content of the document now before Cabinet.
- 2.20 It is critical that these DtC discussions continue throughout the preparation of the new Local Plan. Due to the increasing emphasis placed on housing delivery by Government, discussions with the other Councils within the South West Hertfordshire Housing Market Area (Watford, Three Rivers, Hertsmere and St Albans) about how needs can be met, will be especially important.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The diagram below sets out the stages of plan-preparation that will follow the Issues and Options consultation. Before taking the plan forward to the next stage (Pre-Submission), the Council will need to take into account the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment processes, alongside other considerations of national policy and guidance, the evidence base and formal consultation responses.

- 3.2 Pre-Submission (also known as 'Publication') stage is currently scheduled for Spring 2018 and involves a further 6 weeks of more formal consultation. Pre-Submission is the stage at which the Council finalises the version of the Local Plan that it wishes to take forward, including detailed site requirements and policy wording. Government regulations do now allow for changes to be made to the Pre-Submission plan before it is submitted for examination.
- 3.3 Cabinet will of course be informed of the key issues raised through the Issues and Options consultation (via a Consultation Report), and asked to agree a final growth option before progressing to Pre-Submission.

Local Plan Preparation Stages



4. ANNEXES

The following annexes form part of this report:

- Annex 1 - Issues and Options consultation document (August 2017)
- Annex 2 - Sustainability Appraisal Working Note (August 2017).