

JOINT LOCAL PLAN – ISSUES PAPER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Purpose of the Report

- a) To consider the Joint Local Plan – Issues Paper Consultation Document for public consultation purposes.
- b) To consider the revised work programme for the production of the Joint Local Plan

Recommendation

- 1. That it be recommended to Cabinet to approve the publication of the Issues Paper Consultation Document (Appendix 1), in line with the methods of consultation set out in the adopted Joint Statement of Community Involvement.**
- 2. That a report be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Committee on the results of the Issues public consultation exercise, as part of the next stage in the Joint Local Plan Process – Strategic Options in summer 2016.**
- 3. That it be recommended to Cabinet to agree to the revised work programme for the production of the Joint Local Plan, set out in the report, and that this is published as an update to the Council's Local Development Scheme.**

Reasons

To provide the Planning Committee with the same report on the matters outlined above as is being submitted to Cabinet on 20 January, and to give the Planning Committee the opportunity to make its views on the report known to Cabinet.

The Issues Paper Consultation document does not set or propose Council policy and so the decision to approve it for consultation purposes falls to the Executive (i.e. the Cabinet).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Issues consultation forms part of the preparation of the Joint Local Plan, which is a statutory development plan and is being jointly prepared with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The Plan will eventually replace the adopted Joint Core Spatial Strategy, which was adopted in 2009 and covers the period 2006 to 2026, as well as, the saved policies from the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan, adopted in 2003. Once adopted the Joint Local Plan will therefore provide a new and up to date development strategy, which will form the starting point for considering whether a planning application is acceptable. The plan will also allocate land to meet projected needs for housing and employment, which will help to create certainty where significant development will take place and when it is likely to be built. Therefore, the Joint Local Plan will play an important role in attracting and guiding investment in housing and jobs, as well as, retail and community facilities/services. It will also work to secure the physical infrastructure to support new development.

2.0 Background

- 1.2 The councils have signed up to a plan making programme which seeks to get a full plan through the examination process and adopted by late 2018. This involves an iterative process where the overarching development strategy is developed through a number of stages involving several rounds of public consultation, see section 2.1.

- 1.3 In September 2015 the Planning Committee considered a report which gave an update in respect of the Local Plan timetable and proposing changes to the pre- production process of the Local Plan, involving an initial consultation on the key issues (demands on the area) to be followed with consultation on the Strategic Options (land supply in response to the issues) in the middle of next year. Members asked Cabinet to note “That in view of the five year housing land supply situation it is important to make progress with the Joint Local Plan.” Cabinet on the 16th September subsequently approved the revised Local Plan process. The effect on the overall timetable, which has now been agreed with officers from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, is set out in section 2.
- 1.4 Members may wish to note that on the 15 September 2015 the Government appointed a panel of experts to consider how the local plan making process could be streamlined in order to reduce the amount of time it takes to get a plan in place. The Panel’s report is expected in January 2016 and this could well have implications for the Joint Local Plan timetable. Your officers will closely monitor the situation to ensure that the timetable is adapted in accordance with any new Government guidelines.
- 1.5 Members are also reminded that the Housing and Planning Bill was introduced on the 13 October 2015. This is proposing separate interventions for putting plans in place more quickly. The Secretary of State will have more powers to, amongst other things, intervene if in their judgement a local authority is not making sufficient progress with its local plan (Clause 107 Secretary of State’s default powers).
- 1.6 This first stage of consultation forms part of the Joint Local Plan Pre-production process, and seeks to identify the key issues and challenges facing the area, which the Joint Local Plan will seek to address over the new plan period 2013 – 2033. The Issues Paper Consultation Document covers eight themes identified below, see section 3.3. The consultation document will summarise the important issues under each of the themes and include a questionnaire and feedback form for comments to be captured and taken forward as part of the next stage of consultation when we will set out a range of policy and strategic options to manage future development needs and aimed at addressing the issues and challenges that have been highlighted at this initial stage.
- 1.7 The issues and challenges identified in the consultation document have largely been drawn from monitoring data prepared by both councils and several significant studies completed this year: **A Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment; A Joint Employment Land Review; a Joint Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment**, and previously published Retail and Leisure Studies.
- 1.8 In addition a draft Sustainability Scoping Report has been prepared and this was the subject of statutory stakeholder consultation during August and September 2015, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The comments from this consultation are being considered with a view to finalising the Scoping Report. The scoping report sets out the approach to assessing the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of any new development strategy and will therefore be used to inform the development of strategic options.
- 1.9 These studies together with the Scoping Report help to lay the essential foundations of the Joint Local Plan. However, it should be noted that further studies will be required during the preparation of the Joint Local Plan to assist the development and appraisal of site allocations.

- 1.10 The draft Issues Paper consultation document is to be considered by this Council's Cabinet on the 20 January 2016. The recommendations of the Planning Committee will be reported to Cabinet via a supplementary report.
- 1.11 Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Cabinet will consider the draft Issues Paper Consultation document for consultation purposes on the 19 January 2016.

2. Proposed Joint Local Plan timetable

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, 2012, and Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, require local authorities to publish and monitor a project timetable or Local Development Scheme, for their development plan documents and supporting documents.
- 2.2 The agreed process for the preparation of the Joint Local Plan is presented in the revised timetable below with the current stage highlighted.

Stage	What it involves	Progress/ Timeframe
Stage 1	Assembly of evidence base	Work on-going
Stage 2	SCI and stakeholder engagement	Statement of Community Involvement has been adopted. And is available to view on our website
Stage 3	Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report	Draft SA Scoping Report consultation with statutory consultees completed in August/September 2015. Further Stakeholder consultation in 2016 at Strategic Options
Stage 4a	Issues Papers Consultation	Consultation timetabled for February / March 2016
Stage 4b	Strategic Options Consultation	Consultation timetabled for July / August 2016
Stage 5	Draft Plan (new policies and potential allocations)	Consultation timetabled for May / June 2017
Stage 6	Final draft: pre-submission Joint Local Plan	Timetabled to be published February / March 2018
Stage 7	Submission of Joint Local Plan to Secretary of State	May 2018
Stage 8	Public examination of Joint Local Plan	May to October 2018
Stage 9	Adoption of final agreed Joint Local Plan by Council	December 2018

- 2.3 It is important to recognise that due to factors outside the councils' control, the proposed timetable has the potential to change, this includes changes to legislation and accompanying regulations, as well as, the timetabling of the examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The greatest risk of this happening is at the Draft Plan and Final Plan stages. This risk is reduced by investing time at the beginning of the

process to get the building blocks of the Plan in place. Nevertheless it should be recognised that receipt of large numbers of major objections may require substantive changes to be made to the Draft/Final plans and/or more evidential work to be carried out. Therefore it will be important to continue to closely monitor progress throughout the process to understand the impact on the Local Plan Programme.

- 2.4 The Joint Local Plan timetable could be put at risk by the impact of other work streams which are outside the control of the Council, such as responding to consultations generated by neighbouring authorities, the preparation of neighbourhood plans prepared by qualifying bodies (two neighbourhood plans are in preparation within the borough) and potential work on planning appeals and inquiries etc.
- 2.5 Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties could also undermine the progress of the Joint Local Plan. The fact that preparation of the Joint Local Plan is being carried out in partnership with the City Council's Planning and Transportation Team provides some flexibility to reduce staff related risks, nevertheless both teams are not yet staffed to their full capacity. Both councils are actively taking steps to address this situation, but the revised timetable is predicated on adequate staff resources. Resources from other departments in both councils will continue to be required to ensure satisfactory progress with the Joint Local Plan.
- 2.6 A Joint Risk Assessment of the Joint Local Plan is currently being updated to take account of the above risks.

3. Proposed issues consultation document

- 3.1 The Issues Paper Consultation Document provides the opportunity to consult on the important issues and challenges identified from key evidence documents and to seek comments and views on them, including asking if we have identified the right issues facing the plan area, before work is undertaken on developing the aims and objectives of the plan's development strategy and setting out options to manage future development and address the key challenges. This front loading will ensure key issues are recognised early before more detailed work is carried out on the draft strategic options.
- 3.2 The Issues Paper Consultation Document (Appendix 1) is in the process of being finalised and given its length will be made available only on the Council's website on the 8 January. [This link will take you to the Planning Committee Page](#) where you will be able to access the Document. A hard copy will also be made available to read in the Members' room. A summary of the key issues highlighted in the Consultation Document is appended to this report, (Appendix 2 Key Issues Diagram).
- 3.3 The Consultation Document is split into eight themes:
 1. **Housing**
 2. **Economy**
 3. **City, Town and Local Centres**
 4. **Transport**
 5. **Health and Communities**
 6. **Heritage**
 7. **Natural Environment**
 8. **Climate Change**
- 3.4 The document seeks to set out a background, baseline position, as well as, the key issues and challenges for each theme. The purpose is to identify where the Joint Local Plan can seek to address these challenges with regard to the provision of

planning policy, which will start to shape the aims, objectives and overall vision for the Plan.

- 3.5 The eight themes follow the topics covered in the National Planning Policy Framework and have been informed by updated evidence, as well as, information from specialist in-house teams at both authorities, including Staffordshire County Council.
- 3.6 A more detailed separate Technical Appendix is also to be provided in each case which sets out in more detail the findings from the evidence base so far and summarised in the Issues consultation document. These Technical Appendices underpin each theme and contain a summary of past trends, strengths and weaknesses section and the policy context. The evidence documents will also be available during the consultation to help informed comments to be made. Essentially this is a nested approach, which provides various levels of information to enable people with different levels of interest and knowledge to be able to participate in the consultation process.
- 3.7 Whilst some of the issues may seem obvious and are indeed not new issues to the area it is important to establish the connections between the themes and understand what has and has not changed since the adoption of the Joint Core Spatial Strategy in 2009, in order to forward plan over the next 20 years and new plan period.

4.0 Draft Consultation Arrangements

- 4.1 The councils adopted a Joint Statement of Community Involvement in July 2015 and this sets out the Councils' commitment to how and when both authorities will consult with the general public at each stage of consultation during the Joint Local Plan process. The framework for the consultation process is therefore in place and will include:

- Duty to cooperate discussions, see below.
- Liaison with statutory consultees & partners
- Publishing documents online and make reference copies available
- Publicising via Press release and social media
- Leaflets and posters
- Focus groups & workshops
- Unmanned exhibition
- Enabling public responses to be submitted
- Publishing and considering all comments received
- Making appropriate changes to documents

It is proposed that the details of these arrangements are agreed in consultation with the portfolio holder for Planning and Housing, with the support of the Borough Council's Communications Team.

4.2 Duty to Cooperate

- 4.3 The key issues identified in this paper are likely to have implications wider than the geographical area of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent. Therefore the consultation will involve consultation with neighbouring local authorities as well as organisations such as Historic England and Natural England and the Environment

Agency. The councils also required to pay regard to the activities and proposals of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Enterprise Partnership and Local Nature Partnership.

- 4.4 The consultation document will also serve to notify these bodies of the intention to prepare a Joint Local Plan for Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Consultation on Issues Papers will set the context for the next stage of consultation – Strategic Options. At this next stage we will take into account representation on the Issues papers to identify key priorities and set out a vision, objectives and aims for the Joint Local Plan. We will also set out options for managing future development needs and where development could be take place. In this respect we have already begun to prepare the foundations with a draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and a draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment methodology.
- 5.2 Both consultation stages are non-statutory but important in introducing what the Joint Local Plan aims to achieve over the plan period 2013 – 2033. Essentially they represent the ‘front door’ to the Local Plan process and, in accordance with section 155 of the NPPF, help to ensure that ‘early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and business’ takes place.

6.0 Appendices

- [Appendix 1:](#)
Issues Paper Consultation Document
- [Appendix 2:](#)
Local Plan Key Issues Diagram

7.0 Background Papers

- Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- Joint Employment Land Review.
- Joint Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA).
- Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy.
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Retail and Leisure Study, 2011.
- Stoke-on-Trent Retail and Leisure Study, 2014.
- Housing and Planning Bill, 2015.
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004.
- Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations, 2012.
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004.
- Technical Appendices.
- Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
- Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology.