

Joint local Plan – Strategic Options Consultation Document

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Planning Committee on the completion and outcome of the formal consultation on the Issues stage of the Joint Local Plan.
2. To provide an update on the plan-making process for Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Local Plan and to seek Planning Committee support to go out to public consultation on the Strategic Options Consultation Document. Planning Committee recommendations and comments will be reported to the Cabinet meeting on 27 June 2017 where a decision will be made whether to approve the document for public consultation.

Recommendations

1. **That Planning Committee note the responses to the consultation exercise carried out on the Issues Paper Consultation Document as set out in in the Joint Local Plan Issues Consultation and Responses Document.**
2. **That it be recommended to Cabinet to approve the publication of the Strategic Options Consultation Document and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal Report in line with the methods of consultation set out in the adopted Joint Statement of Community Involvement.**
3. **That a report be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Committee on the results of the Strategic Options public consultation exercise, as part of the next stage in the Joint Local Plan process – Preferred Options later in 2017.**
4. **That it be recommended to Cabinet to agree the revised timetable (attached as Appendix 2) for the production of the Joint Local Plan, 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 27 June 2017, and to give the Planning Committee the opportunity to make its views on the report known to Cabinet.

The Strategic Options 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).

Regulation 18 of the 2012 Regulations require the council as the Local Planning Authority to publish and consult on its proposal for the local plan and to consider any representations received.

To ensure the Council's Local Development Scheme is kept up to date.

1. Background

- 1.1 Planning Committee is aware of previous decisions to replace the Joint Core Strategy by developing a Joint Local Plan with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the adoption of a Joint Statement of Community Involvement and undertaking formal public consultation on the Issues Consultation Document produced as the first stage of the local plan-making process, in February/March 2016.

- 1.2 The next stage is to consider the strategic growth and broad location options, which at this point are essentially framed around housing and employment needs for the area. These are fully outlined in the Strategic Options Consultation document, a hard copy is available on request.
- 1.3 The Local Plan is a statutory requirement and needs to conform with the requirements set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 (“the 2004 Act”) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (“ the 2012 Regulations”).
- 1.4 The Joint Local Plan, will guide long term planning policies which will work to manage development and direct investment across the plan area up to the end of the plan period in 2033. This is important to provide certainty to the development industry and ensure that spatial planning works to help meet the needs of local people and businesses.
- 1.5 Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s Planning Committee will consider the proposed Strategic Options Consultation Document on the 26 June 2017, and their Cabinet will meet to consider their recommendations on the 27 June 2017. Stoke-on-Trent’s Planning Committee will be informed of the minutes of this Planning Committee.

2. Proposed strategic options consultation document

- 2.1 An Issues consultation paper was approved in January 2016 and was subject to formal public consultation in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. This resulted in 82 responses generating more than 600 comments. The results of the consultation exercise and the officer response thereto are contained within the Issues Consultation and Response Document, a hard copy is available on request. A refined list of issues and challenges are also appended to the Strategic Options Consultation Document and the general emerging themes have been taken into account and reflected in the Strategic Options Consultation Document.
- 2.2 The next stage of the plan making process is firstly to present a new draft vision for the plan area, which is supported by six new draft strategic aims and twenty seven draft objectives, which once agreed will guide the Joint Local Plan’s development strategy. At this stage they act as a framework for considering how the proposed strategic options help to deliver the draft aims and objectives.
- 2.3 Secondly, using evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, 2017, and the Employment Land Review, 2015, four growth scenarios (A-D) are proposed. This is done by setting out the number of dwellings and jobs/employment land that would be required over the plan period under each scenario. Various challenges and opportunities are identified to guide people on the possible implications of taking forward each scenario.
- 2.4 Critically the Strategic Options Consultation Document identifies an Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) - Growth Scenario C – Supporting Economic Growth. The OAN is important because Planning Practice Guidance says that councils must plan positively to meet their OAN for housing and employment. The OAN will also form the basis of future five year housing land supply calculations.
- 2.5 The updated analysis presented in this Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2017 indicates that there is an objectively assessed need (OAN) for 1,390 houses per annum or 27,800 dwellings to be met across the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Housing Market Area for the plan period 2013 to 2033. This is within the range previously concluded in the SHMA 2015 (1,177 – 1,504 dwellings per annum).
- 2.6 The recommended OAN allows for anticipated changes in:

- Population (births, deaths, age sex etc.);
- Household formation (includes a vacancy rate),
- Housing market trends
- Labour force
- Economic Activity/likely job creation;
- and
- Migration levels.

The housing OAN is set out in the Strategic Options Consultation document at 4.2 to 4.5 but for convenience a detailed breakdown of the OAN is attached at Appendix 1.

- 2.7 The equivalent OAN required to ensure we can support economic growth to meet anticipated needs for land of the different business sectors has been separately modelled and this is identified as 199ha per annum. See Employment Growth Scenario C- Meeting our Employment Projections paragraphs 5.14 to 5.17.
- 2.8 Consideration is then given to six potential broad location options which present alternative approaches to *how* such housing and employment growth *could* be accommodated across the plan area. The purpose of these broad locations is to explore a range of alternative approaches that could be considered and could potentially be taken forward for further investigation at the next stage of the Joint Local Plan process. Again each option considers the opportunities and challenges of the different approaches.
- 2.9 The proposed strategic aims and objectives and each of the proposed growth and broad location options have been subjected to a sustainability appraisal, which has tested all proposals against a set of economic, environmental and social sustainability objectives. The results of the appraisal are set out in a Sustainability Appraisal Report, which will also be subject to consultation, together with a non-technical summary, alongside the Strategic Options Consultation Document. A hard copy is available on request.
- 2.10 It is worth emphasising that while at this stage of the plan making process there is an indication of potential areas to accommodate growth it is not intended to be site specific – this will follow at the next stage of the plan making process , which is now proposed to include consultation on the preferred growth and site options. Similarly a preferred growth scenario, or broad location is not proposed at this stage. Again this will be the next stage of the plan making process, which is now proposed to be ‘Preferred Options’.
- 2.11 What the plan-making process does need to take into account is the need for additional housing (which is also reflected nationally) and the scale of economic growth predicted. This does present a challenge and through the strategic options consultation the aim is to articulate these and show potential impact. Dependent on the strategic option taken forward, there is anticipated to be significant impact on infrastructure including transport, education, water and health. Close working with other departments and organisations is being maintained through the plan production, alongside public consultation on the options to help to narrow down a preferred level of growth and the broad preferred locations to accommodate this.

3. Draft consultation arrangements

- 3.1 The councils adopted a Joint Statement of Community Involvement in July 2015 and this sets out each 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 with neighbouring authorities and statutory agencies.
- 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
- Manned exhibitions/events
- Consultation material in key civic venues and online
- Enabling public responses to be submitted
- Publishing and considering all comments received

3.2 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, who are working closely with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Communications Team.

4. Proposed Joint Local Plan timetable

- 4.1 The plan-making timetable approved in 2014 has slipped significantly. Your officers are well aware of the importance of preparing the Joint Local Plan in a timely manner. However, the production of a NPPF compliant plan is complicated and not without risks. A balance must continually be struck between satisfactory progress and ensuring that the Plan is supported by a robust evidence base. In this respect your officers have had regard to lessons learned from other councils who have experienced difficulties when short cuts have been made to speed up the plan making process and this has meant that your officers have had to take a more realistic view of timescales between each stage of the plan making process and the amount of evidence required to inform the emerging development strategy. Consequently there have been necessary updates to the evidence base including the Open Space Strategy, SHMA Update and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which was dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a Viability Toolkit, but the latter was significantly delayed as a result of procurement difficulties. Other evidence documents, such as the Open Space Strategy, which has been used to update the latest Draft SHLAA, are not in the full control of the council's Planning Policy Team, and the production of these and other 'sister' evidence documents have the potential to impact on the programme of the Local Plan.
- 4.2 While the NPPF stresses the need for proportionate evidence the Joint Local Plan evidence base also has to be continually reviewed in the light of frequent changes to national planning policy, as well as, the publication of Government White Papers the most recent of which was the Housing white Paper.
- 4.3 The progress of the Joint Local Plan has also been seriously impeded by difficulties in the recruitment of suitably experienced planning policy officers. This is a national issue and consequently other districts across the County continue to experience similar difficulties. Steps were taken to bolster the Newcastle Planning Policy Team in 2016 following the departure of two team members. As a result three officers have joined the authority in the last six months to support the preparation of the Joint Local Plan and one part time officer is engaged to support the neighbourhood planning process. However, it must be recognised that the work undertaken by the planning policy team is dependent upon interdepartmental cooperation and if there are resource issues in other areas this can introduce delay.

- 4.4 It is worth noting that a colocation arrangement has been put in place, hosted by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, in order to achieve extra efficiency and this is already proving to be beneficial.
- 4.5 A revised timetable is proposed for the next stages of the plan making process including preparation of a preferred options document, draft plan and submission of a final plan for adoption and publication. The revised timetable is set out at Appendix 2 and will be reported to Cabinet for approval.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following this consultation exercise, each council will consider comments received and produce a report including the councils' response.
- 5.2 Work will be done to continue to develop and assess the identified strategic options in more detail and to continue to collect evidence to inform the statutory Sustainability Appraisal.
- 5.3 The preferred strategic option will then be identified and published towards the end of 2017 for consultation, setting out why this approach was chosen in preference to other options considered. Following the preferred option consultation, policies will then be drafted to support the chosen preferred option and linked to the strategic objectives. The draft policies will then be presented as part of a Draft Local Plan for further consultation.
- 5.2 This consultation stage is non-statutory but important in introducing what the Joint Local Plan aims to achieve over the plan period 2013 – 2033. Essentially both the Issues and Strategic Options consultations together with the next consultation on Preferred Options 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. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Joint Local Plan OAN Explained
- Appendix 2 – Revised Plan-Making Timetable

7. Background Papers

- **Issues Consultation Document and supporting Technical Papers**
- **Issues Consultation and Responses Document**
- **Strategic Options Consultation Document**
- **Strategic Housing Market Assessment, July 2015 and Update June 2017.**
- **Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment June 2017**
- **Joint SHLAA Viability Assessment Toolkit October 2016**
- **The Employment Land Review – December 2015**
- **Joint Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**
- **Strategic Options Sustainability Appraisal Report and Non-Technical Summary**