

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – DRAFT ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION PAPER

Submitted by: Executive Director of Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Planning, Regeneration, and Town Centres

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document draft Issues and Options Paper for consultation purposes and to seek authority to go out to public consultation.

Recommendations

- (a) That Cabinet agree to rename the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document as the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.**
- (b) That Cabinet agree to approve the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan draft Issues and Options Paper for public consultation purposes.**
- (c) That Cabinet agree to the draft consultation proposals set out in this report.**
- (d) That Cabinet agree to receive a future report setting out the recommendations of the Planning Committee on the results of the first stage of public consultation with a view to approving the next steps.**

Reasons

To ensure the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document proceeds in accordance with the agreed timetable. The Issues and Options consultation paper 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 draft Issues and Options Consultation Paper is an important stepping stone towards the development of the Council's approach to the allocation of land, as part of the statutory town planning process. The Issues and Options Paper and associated publicity will identify issues to be debated and is intended to initiate public discussion, even though there are no proposals by the Council at this stage.

2. Background

- 2.1 In February, 2012, Cabinet, taking into account views expressed by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 13 December, 2012, agreed a revised timetable for the preparation of a 'Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document.' It was also agreed that additional consultations be undertaken prior to the preparation of the draft Issues and Options Paper and that a further report be submitted to the July Cabinet setting out the recommendations of the Planning Committee on an Issues and Options Paper, incorporating a set of generic development management policies and taking account of the Borough's infrastructure requirements, together with further details of the public consultation arrangements.

- 2.2 A draft Issues and Options Paper together with a set of draft consultation proposals is to be considered by Planning Committee on 10 July. Due to the tight timescale the recommendations of the Committee will be reported to Cabinet via a supplementary report.
- 2.3 Therefore, the purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Planning Committee prior to considering for approval (a) the scope and contents of the draft Issues and Options Paper for public consultation purposes and (b) the proposed consultation arrangements.
- 2.4 Consultation on the Consultation Arrangements
- 2.5 It was resolved at the Cabinet Meeting, in February, that a public consultation exercise be undertaken, to help inform the Site Allocations & Policies consultation arrangements. The consultation ran for a total of six weeks between 16 March and 27 April. Residents' Associations were given until 31 May to respond. The results of this consultation and arising consultation proposals are set out at section 7.
- 2.6 Members may wish to note that Councillor Loades, as the former chair of the Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, acted as a critical friend in both this specific consultation exercise and the development of the Issues and Options consultation arrangements.
- 2.7 SHLAA Stakeholder Consultation
- 2.8 Cabinet further resolved that officers should undertake a 'Stakeholder Consultation', as part of the review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2010, (SHLAA). An Interim SHLAA 2011 document was prepared for the purposes of the consultation. The consultation period ran between 8 March and 5 April. A selection of house builders, local property agents and planning consultants, as well as utility providers and the Environment Agency, were invited to comment on a draft long list of potential strategic housing sites and a selection of non-strategic sites.
- 2.9 The key purpose of this targeted consultation was to use the expertise and knowledge of the development industry to test the assumptions and judgements made by officers in respect of:
- Housing delivery/completion rates;
 - Site capacity;
 - Site viability;
 - Site suitability
 - Site availability and;
 - Phasing over the plan period.
- 2.10 The response to consultation exercise was quite small. However, the feedback received from 'stakeholders' generally endorsed the Council's approach and assessment and proved helpful in providing more information about a number of sites and has therefore been beneficial in helping to put in place a more robust strategy. A summary report of the results will be published on the Council's planning website in due course.
- 2.11 Following the conclusion of the Stakeholder Consultation officers have continued to consider the deliverability and developability (definitions are provided in the Glossary, on page 6 of Issues & Options Paper) of sites in the interim SHLAA 2011, including how market conditions may affect economic viability and this has informed the current list of strategic and

non-strategic housing sites identified in the draft Issues and Options Paper, appended to this report. It is the intention to publish a Final SHLAA, 2012/13, alongside the Issues and Options Paper. Section 4.0 of this report sets out some of the key findings of the Assessment.

2.12 National Context

2.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was published on 27 March, 2012 and the new Local Planning Regulations (Regulations), which came into force on 6 April, have resulted in many changes to the planning system. However, the primacy of the development plan remains, as does the requirement to exercise the function of preparing development plans "with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development".

2.14 The NPPF is clear in encouraging Councils to have up to date Local Plans in place and to get appropriate new policies adopted as soon as possible. Members are reminded that the NPPF indicates that policies from the adopted Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2003-2011, which have been saved under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, can now only be given due weight (as opposed to full weight) , according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

2.15 Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy

2.16 The Council has an adopted Core Spatial Strategy and this means that a key part of the 'Local Plan' is in place. The Strategy establishes some very important planning principles through strategic policies aimed at addressing some of the wider issues and challenges facing the Borough and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. The Strategy already plays a key role in the determination of planning applications.

2.17 Critically the Core Spatial Strategy has set the level of growth required to meet local needs for housing, employment and retailing between 2006 and 2026. It has also identified the broad location of development to help meet these needs including priority areas for development. Therefore, the broad locations of where development will be concentrated have already been determined.

3. Importance of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document

3.1 Essentially the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) is the second part of the Core Spatial Strategy. Upon adoption, the final Plan will help to meet the borough's objectively assessed needs for housing, employment and retail investment by allocating sites for development over the next 10 -14 years. It will also provide clear policies on what or will not be permitted and where. It will also identify key spatial boundaries including:

- the settlement boundaries for villages in the rural area.
- the boundaries of areas which should be protected and safeguarded.
- the boundaries which impact on retail policies in the town centres.

3.2 It should be noted that whilst this planning document will allocate land and be used to determine planning applications, it will be a key objective to deliver outcomes, which work to improve the prosperity of the Borough and create pleasant, thriving and locally distinctive communities, where people want to live and work. This will require strong community involvement and early and open collaboration with key stakeholders.

3.3 If the Council does not prepare a Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan document then the Council will have much less control over where development takes place, and it will be more difficult to direct housing, employment and retail and leisure developments to areas where they are needed and will benefit local people. Without this Plan it will also be difficult to minimise the physical impact of development.

4. Issues

4.1 This part of the report flags up some of the critical issues which have emerged from an examination of the planning evidence base and which are set out in detail in the draft Issues and Options Paper.

4.2 Housing

4.3 The adopted Core Spatial Strategy has identified a need for 5,700 (net) new homes to be built in the Borough between 2006 and 2026. To date 1,265 net new homes have been built and thus the remaining housing target is 4,435. However, the latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has identified a potential land supply for 4,326 homes, which is only 97% of the target. Consequently the Borough has insufficient land to accommodate the identified housing need over the next 14 years (the period until the end of the Plan Period).

4.4 Your officers are aware that Cabinet are being asked to consider at this meeting a separate report in respect of the Council's Assets Disposal Programme, and particularly in relation to the future of the seven greenfield sites, which formed part of the Newcastle Development Programme (NDP) and were the subject a scrutiny process in 2011. Members need to be aware that these seven sites are identified in the draft SHLAA 2012/13 and therefore currently form part of the potential housing land supply. Collectively the sites have the potential to deliver a maximum 353 new homes. The inclusion of the NDP sites in the SHLAA reflects the Cabinet resolution made in September, 2011, 'that the appropriateness of development, in land use terms, of the seven NDP sites, along with all other surplus non-operational land belonging to the Council be reviewed as part of the forthcoming Site Allocations Development Plan Document process.'

4.5 The exclusion of any significant sites at this stage would exacerbate the land supply situation, a situation which may get worse as it is inevitable that sites will drop out during the Site Allocation and Policies process. However, it is also possible that new ones could be identified, although it is not expected that sufficient new sites would be found to meet the entire shortfall. The implications of this for plan making are considered in sections 4.11 – 4.13.

4.6 Should Cabinet resolve to dispose of the seven NDP sites then reference to the sites will be removed from the SHLAA on the basis that as the sites are no longer available they cannot be regarded as 'developable.' The Issues and Options Paper will also be amended accordingly, including making any necessary adjustments to the housing land supply figures.

4.7 Employment

4.8 The shortfall of housing land is compounded by a shortage of good quality employment sites.

4.9 The Core Spatial Strategy set a figure for the amount of employment land required by the Borough at 112 hectares (ha.) (277 acres) between 2006 and 2026. Much of that need has been met in the first five years of the Strategy and we have approximately 56 ha (139 acres) of that need remaining. We have enough land to meet the remaining Employment target, but the sites are not necessarily commercially attractive

4.10 However, a recent Employment Land Review has identified a vastly increased up-to-date figure for the demand for employment land in the Borough of 150 ha (371 acres), over the next 15 years. This revised demand of 150 ha significantly exceeds the amount of land currently that we are able to allocate (56 ha). The 56 ha we are able to allocate should be sufficient to meet demand, until it is possible to update the employment need figures and allocate more land through completion of a formal review of the Core Spatial Strategy, although depending on the sites allocated we could have shortfalls in land to meet all employment types.

4.11 Plan Making Implications

4.12 The above circumstances are problematical because when preparing its development plan the Council is required to 'attempt' to ensure that sufficient land of suitable quality is provided to meet its objectively assessed needs for housing, employment, retail and leisure, until the end of the Plan Period in 2026. However, the key word is 'attempt'.

4.13 If the Issues and Options process does not identify new sites to meet the shortfalls in supply then the first step to address this issue is to explore the feasibility of meeting these shortfalls on sites outside the Borough's administrative boundary. If this proves unsuccessful then the Council would need to prepare a plan for a ten, as opposed to a fourteen year period, which in respect of meeting our housing needs, is the minimum period we can plan for according to the NPPF. This approach would also require the Council to undertake an early review of the Core Spatial Strategy. This is already planned and is likely to begin at the end of 2014.

5. Issues and Options Scope

5.1 Issues and Options

5.2 Preparing the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document is both an iterative and a collaborative process, involving extensive dialogue with the local community and key stakeholders over two years, in addition to an independent public examination.

5.2 It is a key aim of this first stage of consultation to firstly encourage a debate on the key (spatial) issues that need to be considered before any land allocations and new planning policies are proposed. The Paper also presents a series of alternative options to address these issues, which the public will be asked to comment on.

5.3 Each option will have different outcomes, but it will be made clear that the Council has no preferred options at this stage, this will be later in the process after we have taken into account the views of the public. The public will also be asked if they think there are any other issues or options the Council should consider.

5.4 Secondly this consultation stage will serve to highlight the borough's potential land supply. This will done through the publication of a long draft list of housing, employment, and retail sites.

5.5 There are a number of important advantages in highlighting all potential development sites at this early stage:

- It will provide an early and effective opportunity to influence and direct the content of the Plan
- It will demonstrate that the Council is conducting the site allocation process in an entirely transparent manner. It should be noted that the sites are already identified in the Council's evidence base (draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment,

2012/13 (not yet published), Employment Land Review, 2011, Retail and Leisure Study, 2011). Furthermore, the Issues and Options Paper, which formed part of the Planning Committee agenda in December, 2011 included a draft long list of sites and excluding the sites from this version could draw criticism that the Council was not being open and transparent.

- It will help to put in context the critical fact that the Council has a very limited land supply.
- It will help to put the issues regarding the supply of brownfield and greenfield development sites in context.
- It will help to flush out any issues which may impact on the deliverability of a site and reduce the possibility of unexpected issues being raised at a later and more critical stage.
- It would minimise the need to introduce a further stage of consultation after the next planned stage of consultation – the draft 'Options' stage. This would considerably lengthen the timescale for preparing the Plan without adding any value to the overall process.
- Without the sites it would be quite a high level and less meaningful consultation.

5.6 Strategic and non-strategic sites

5.7 The public will be invited to consider a draft list of strategic sites and non-strategic sites, which don't have planning permission. A strategic site is one which is considered central to the delivery of the projected needs for housing, employment and retail provision in the Borough and in this respect a threshold has been set of 1ha (2.27 acres).

5.8 For clarification the 'strategic' housing sites are those sites with a minimum capacity of 30 - 35 houses and above and collectively are capable of accommodating the majority of new homes in the Borough. Sites below the 1 ha threshold are included if they are strategically important and or have experienced pressure to be developed for retail/employment purposes.

5.9 The development of non-strategic sites (generally below 1 ha, or 2.27 acres, in size) will be guided by development management policies; a small selection of these policies are being put forward for consideration at this stage. Although when considered individually these sites may not be significant in terms of delivering growth, collectively these smaller sites will be required to achieve the growth needed in the Borough. Opinion on the suitability of these non-strategic sites for development will therefore be sought

5.10 Generic Development Management Policies

5.11 In accordance with the Cabinet resolution to incorporate a limited number of generic development management policies into the Issues and Options Paper for public consultation purposes, your officers have undertaken an internal review of the 'saved' Policies from the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2003-2011 with a view to selecting a group of 'generic' policies, which might continue to be used to guide development in the future. Policies were disregarded if they: repeated national policy; did not conform to the National Planning Policy Framework; made reference to specific development sites or planning standards; made reference to other saved policies which are likely to be replaced; and were based on character assessments which may need to be updated.

5.12 Having gone through this exercise your officers identified just a few policies, suitable for consultation purposes, but when considered together were very disparate and which could not be read in context, particularly given that the Issues and Options consultation may well lead to the creation of a new policy context. Whilst there are advantages in replacing the

policies 'saved' from the adopted Local Plan as quickly as possible, following the introduction of the NPPF, it is not considered that full weight could be given to these policies by subjecting them to public consultation at this early stage. Indeed if the policies were to be opposed it may undermine their current status.

- 5.13 Therefore, on balance your officers consider that the inclusion of a limited number of policies at this stage of the consultation process would appear to add very little value and for this reason the Issues and Options Paper does not contain a chapter on potential generic development management policies.

6. Issues and Options Content

- 6.1 The Introduction of the draft Paper aims to explain the role and purpose of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document and its relationship with the Core Spatial Strategy. It presents a number of guiding principles which must be taken into account during the preparation of the Plan, including the National Planning Policy Framework and the objectives for growth established by the adopted Core Spatial Strategy. Members may wish to note that the housing and employment need figures, identified in the Core Spatial Strategy, are largely based on local need due to local population growth.

- 6.2 A great deal of emphasis is placed on successfully addressing the challenges we face through a collaborative process and a flow chart is used to explain the consultation process.

- 6.3 The draft Paper includes four chapters: Housing and Open Space; Employment and Economic Development; Retail and Town Centres; and Infrastructure. The Housing and Open Space chapter includes a list of strategic sites and a list of non-strategic housing sites provided as an annex to the Paper. A Glossary is provided at the end of each chapter where appropriate. The Glossary is intended to act as an introductory guide to planning and is not a source for statutory definitions.

7. Proposed Draft Consultation Arrangements

7.1 Results of the Consultation on the Consultation Arrangements

- 7.2 A total of 137 responses were received, which includes responses from participants of residents' groups/associations, Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs), Parish Councils and Mr Paul Farrelly MP.

- The majority of responses support:- the use of a public notice in the Sentinel (77%); articles in the Reporter (76%); posters in libraries contact centres (72%); and the Council's website (67%) as the most preferred ways that members of the public should be informed about preparation of the Plan.
- The majority (74% and above) of responses support an 8 week consultation period - at the 1st stage - Issues and Options, the 2nd stage - Draft Options and the 3rd stage - Draft publication of the Plan.
- Public meetings (81%) and manned exhibitions (63%) were the two most popular consultation event types.
- The majority of responses support a combination of daytime and evening events (66%). Evening events were also more popular than day time events
- 75% of respondents supported the view that events should be held in their local ward and 32% in their Parish area. The interpretation of this result has taken into account the fact that not all respondents would live in an area with a Parish Council. 32% supported the use of Locality Action Partnerships (LAP)

7.3 Draft Consultation Proposals

7.4 These results have been used to inform the draft consultation proposals in respect of the Issues and Options Paper as outlined below.

7.5 It is proposed to conduct the public consultation over an eight week period from the second week in August until the beginning of October, 2012. It is acknowledged this will mean that part of the consultation will take place during the summer holiday period, but Members may wish to note that most participants in the consultation survey considered that conducting the consultation over an eight week period would address this. Certainly whilst some people are likely to be away it could be argued that many people may have more time to engage because they take time off but don't go away.

7.6 The public meeting events will be spread out over a three week period in August, see below. The order of events reflects the availability of venues, but the programme has been deliberately organised for public meetings to take place as early as a possible in the consultation period in order to try to speak to as many people as possible at an early stage in the process and to maximise the amount of time for people to consider the contents of the Paper and to respond. People will be required to submit their representations on a form to be provided, therefore, those people who are unable to attend a meeting will not be prevented from expressing their views. Further details relating to the calendar of public meetings are set out under section 7.9 and in the timetable appended to this report.

7.7 Draft Consultation Package

- Full use of the Council's Site Allocations and Policies DPD dedicated web page to promote the consultation process in advance and during the formal consultation period.
- Advert to be placed in the Sentinel second week of August.
- 8 week consultation period between Monday 6 August – Monday 1 October.
- 14 day and evening events including 9 public meetings to be held in the evening.
- Manned exhibitions Kidsgrove Town Centre and Newcastle Town Centre.
- Rotated unmanned exhibitions in Newcastle Library, the Guild Hall, Jubilee 2, Kidsgrove Contact Centre, and the Madeley Centre.
- MP Briefing (if requested).
- Presentation to the 'Newcastle Business Panel'
- Presentation to the sixth^h form students attending Newcastle College. (TBC)
- Radio broadcast.
- Twitter/Facebook.
- E-panel online consultation – to be sent out Monday 6th August.
- Presentation to LAP Chairs meetings - July and September to help facilitate dissemination of information.
- Consultation Pack. This will contain: Issues and Options Paper; Comment Form; material from exhibitions and list of events/contact details. It will be distributed to libraries and key community buildings. Packs will be made available to ward members, County Councillors, MPs and LAP Chairs. Town and Parish Council's will also be sent packs. The packs will include maps of strategic and non-strategic sites (on a ward basis).
- Maps of sites will also be made available on-line and black and white copies will be provided free of charge on request.
- Posters outside venues advertising a consultation event and inside venues promoting the availability of the Consultation Pack.

7.8 It should be noted that it will not be possible to use the Council's Reporter due to the fact that the Reporter deadline is before the Cabinet decision date and distribution of the Reporter is scheduled to take place during the 'call in period'. These dates cannot change due to the Reporter contract and Government legislation, which limits the number of editions to four per annum.

7.9 Public Meetings

7.10 The consultations results suggest that people want local meetings, but it would be excessive to organise a meeting in every ward. The areas to be invited to participate in meetings largely correspond with the LAP administrative areas, but it is not considered practical to use these administrative areas as the basis for the meetings for the following reason: Keele forms part of the LAP administrative area, which includes Silverdale and Parkside, but in respect of the Core Spatial Strategy it forms part of the Area Spatial Strategy for the Rural Area. This would necessitate a discussion of both urban and rural issues. Matters are further complicated by the fact that part of Knutton is included in the Silverdale, Parkside and Keele LAP.

7.11 Therefore, nine evening public meetings are proposed across the Borough. Three of these meetings will be held in the rural area (Loggerheads, Madeley and Audley Parish) in recognition of the geographical spread of the rural population.

7.12 It has been agreed in principle that the chairing of these meetings will be shared between Councillor Boden, as portfolio holder for Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres and Councillors Fear and Hambleton, as Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning Committee, respectively. Ward councillors will be encouraged to attend meetings to be held in their wards and to disseminate information. Parish and Town Councils will also be asked to disseminate information. The Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) have also agreed to promote the consultation on their website and, depending on timescales, through their 'In Touch' newsletter.

7.14 Members of LAPs, Town and Parish Councils will be invited to participate in these events. Your officers are aware that a number of Parish Council and LAP meetings clash with each other, attending Parish Council meetings could therefore be problematic, and it is considered that given the overall consultation package sufficient public meetings are being provided.

8. Renaming the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document

8.1 NPPF has reintroduced the term Local Plan and this is now embedded in both the NPPF and new Local Planning Regulations. This has prompted your officers to propose that the 'Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document' in future is referred to as the 'Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan'. This has several advantages, namely: local residents and elected members are familiar with the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan, 2003 – 2011, which the Site Allocations and Policies document would effectively replace; and it is considered that the title of the document would be simplified and, therefore, much easier to say and use. Upon adoption of the 'Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan,' it would make sense to refer to the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy and the Site Allocations & Policies Local Plan together as the new Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan.

9. Proposal

9.1 That Cabinet agree the scope and content of the draft Issues and Options Report and the consultation arrangements.

- 9.2 That Cabinet agree to receive a future report
- 9.3 That the Site Allocations and Policies DPD is referred to in the future as the 'Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.'

10. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

- 10.1 To enable key decisions to be made in accordance with the agreed timetable and to work towards strengthening the Council's ability to control the development of land and direct investment to appropriate places at the appropriate time.
- 10.2 To achieve the Council's objectives for open and transparent decision making.

11. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 11.1 It should be noted that the consultation on the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document draft Issues and Options Paper will be carried out within existing revenue resources of the Council.
- 11.2 Failure to engage effectively with the community in the early stages of the preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document could ultimately affect the soundness of the Document and this could have serious financial implications in the long term should it be necessary to start the process again.
- 11.3 There is sufficient capacity to resource the number of public meetings planned, but if the number of evening meetings was significantly increased then it would prove difficult to resource. It is intended to supplement the team with staff from other sections within the Directorate (most notably within the Regeneration and Development Management teams). Such an arrangement may necessitate re-profiling of work programmes and there may be adverse impacts upon the core workload of those other teams. Nevertheless steps will be taken to minimise impact on service users/customers.

12. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 12.1 Upon adoption the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document will facilitate the delivery of spatial elements of the Council's Community Strategy.
- 12.2 The Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document must be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Thus the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document should address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change and in this way the plan making process should directly contribute to the delivery of all the Council's Strategic Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. In particular it should have positive impact on those priorities relating to: regeneration and business prosperity, including the vitality of the town centres; quality of life; health and well being, and the physical environment.

13. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 13.1 The preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document must be carried out in accordance the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations, 2012. It must also take account of provisions of the Localism Act, 2011 relating to town and country planning.

- 13.2 The Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document must also be consistent with the principles and policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.
- 13.3 Planning policies must also reflect and where appropriate promote relevant EU obligations and statutory requirements.
- 13.4 In addition to consulting the public the Council is now legally required to cooperate with neighbouring authorities and the County Council on relevant issues, as well as, work collaboratively with public health leads and organisations, utility and infrastructure providers, and a variety of statutory and private sector bodies.
- 13.5 The public consultation on the Issues and Options Paper is not a statutory requirement, but in accordance with section 155 of the NPPF 'early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and business is essential.'

14. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 14.1 As part of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan an equalities impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the Plan is prepared in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures.

15. **Major Risks**

- 15.1 Should it become clear that it will not be possible to plan for the area's objectively assessed development needs and infrastructure requirements to the end of the Plan Period then there will be a risk that the Plan may ultimately be found 'unsound.' This is because it cannot be known for certain what the Planning Inspector's attitude will be to a 10 year plan proposal. Furthermore, the development industry and landowners may use this as an opportunity to advance sites in the Green Belt and at the same time it may encourage strong objections from this sector.
- 15.2 However, on the basis that by only planning for the next 10 years we can meet our retail and housing needs (effectively two thirds of our objectively assessed needs) and that this is an interim means of meeting our needs, prior to undertaking an early formal review of the Core Strategy, it is likely that an Inspector would be willing to take a pragmatic view. It will be important to ensure that they are given enough evidence to be safely pragmatic.
- 15.3 The Issues and Options consultation will be an important means of gathering the necessary evidence to help the Council make its case and finding out whether this approach will ultimately succeed. Should the Issues and Options consultation ultimately reveal that the track we are aiming to take isn't feasible, then the Council will have very robust evidence to justify a different approach and to inform the direction of another Plan.
- 15.4 Risks will be reviewed as part of the process.

16. **Key Decision Information**

- 16.1 This is a key decision owing to its likely impact across the entire Borough.
- 16.2 It has been included in the Forward Plan.

17. **Previous Cabinet Decisions**

- 17.1 In September, 2011, Cabinet agreed that the appropriateness of development, in land use terms, of the seven NDP sites, along with all other surplus non-operational land belonging to the Council be reviewed as part of the forthcoming Site Allocations Development Plan Document process.
- 17.2 In October, 2011, Cabinet agreed to the preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document in accordance with a revised timetable and that a further report be submitted on an Issues and Options paper with further details of consultation arrangements.
- 17.3 In February 2012, Cabinet agreed that a revised timetable for the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document be adopted. It was also agreed that additional consultations be undertaken prior to the preparation of the draft Issues and Options Paper and that a further report be submitted to the July Cabinet setting out the recommendations of the Planning Committee on an Issues and Options Paper, incorporating a set of generic development management policies and taking account of the Borough's infrastructure requirements, together with further details of the public consultation arrangements.
- 17.3 It was further resolved that at the Issues and Options Stage be advertised that the entire process is open for public comment and a generic email address be provided for this purpose.

18. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document Draft Issues and Options Paper

Appendix B – Draft Issues and Options Consultation Timetable