

ADOPTION OF THE LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036 PART ONE: PLANNING STRATEGY

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That the Cabinet recommends to Council that

- a. The **Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy**, as attached in Appendix One, be adopted as part of the Development Plan for the area.
- b. The Local Plan Policies Map be updated to include the changes set out in Appendix Two.
- c. Authority is delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to make any final editing changes considered appropriate to the document prior to final publication.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Government places development plans at the heart of the planning system. The Government requires local planning authorities to prepare Local Plans and review them every 5 years. All planning decisions must be taken in line with the adopted development plan for an area unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2.2 The Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One is the new planning strategy for New Forest District, outside of the New Forest National Park. It sets out policies for the scale and location of new development needed to 2036, balanced with the long-term protection of the character and sensitive environment of the Plan area including the Green Belt.

2.3 The Local Plan plays a key role in enabling or delivering a number of Corporate Plan priorities that are essential to achieving the corporate vision to secure a vibrant and prosperous New Forest:

- **Planning and Infrastructure:** Encouraging development that meets local needs and enhances the special qualities of the environment
- **Housing:** Meeting local housing needs, increasing the supply of high quality affordable homes and promoting sustainable growth.
- **Community Affairs:** Ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit.
- **Leisure and Wellbeing:** Providing local public open space, improved cycling and walking opportunities, promoting physical activity through good urban design and delivering other opportunities to increase the levels of physical activity and a sense of well-being within the district.
- **Environment and Regulatory Services:** Ensuring that future development addresses the impact of climate change locally and protects and enhances our natural environment.
- **Economic Development:** Allocating adequate employment land to help grow the New Forest economy, delivering an appropriate mix and range of housing to support the growth of the New Forest economy and to support improvements in broadband connectivity.

2.4 With the exception of a small number of adopted policies “Saved” for continued use, upon adoption the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy would replace the Local Plan Part 1:Core Strategy for the period up to 2026 (adopted in 2009) and parts of the Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (adopted in 2014), as the statutory basis for making planning decisions in New Forest District, outside of the New Forest National Park.

3. THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

3.1 The Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One Planning Strategy has progressed through the stages shown in the figure below to the final stage, formal adoption by the Council.



3.2 On 1 November 2018, following a period for public representation, the Council submitted the plan it had agreed at Cabinet in June 2018 to the Secretary of State for Examination. The Council has now received the Planning Inspectors’ final written report and its publication marks the completion of a 17-month long Examination of the Local Plan, which included five weeks of public hearings in summer 2019. The two independent Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Local Plan considered the appropriateness and soundness of the Local Plan policies, targets and site allocations for development. The robustness of the Council’s evidence base was rigorously scrutinised and examined, and all representations made on the Local Plan were taken into account.

- 3.3 The Inspectors concluded that subject to the inclusion of a number of Modifications recommended in their report, the Plan is sound. These modifications were consulted on in December 2019/January 2020 and the representations received during the Main Modifications public consultation period were also considered by the Inspectors.
- 3.4 The modifications required by the Inspectors to make the plan 'sound' are modest in nature and effect. This is very good news for the Council. The Local Plan was prepared within the challenging context of continuing reforms to national planning policy and an increasing emphasis on addressing identified development needs locally. Key matters such as the level of housing provision, the choice of sites, and the release of land from the Green Belt for development, were robustly challenged at the Examination hearing sessions. Yet the recommended modifications are relatively minor and do not significantly change the planning strategy for the area that the Council had set out in its submitted draft Local Plan in November 2018.
- 3.5 Furthermore, the Inspectors have not indicated any need for an early review of the planning strategy of the area. (Local Plans are normally expected to be reviewed every five years, but Inspectors can advise that an earlier review is needed).

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The Council must now decide either to formally adopt the Local Plan (as modified) or withdraw it and recommence plan preparation. Adoption is strongly recommended to ensure that the Council has an up-to-date policy framework in place. Thereafter the Local Plan document and an accompanying Policies Map, Environmental Report and Adoption Statement would be published as soon as possible in final form.
- 4.2 Following adoption there is also a statutory 6-week period for legal challenges, during which 'aggrieved parties' may make an application to the High Court on the following limited grounds, as set out in Section 113 of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended):
- The Local Plan is not within the appropriate power; and/or
 - A procedural requirement has not been complied with.
- 4.3 Work is now progressing on the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part Two: Non-strategic sites and development management policies. This work will complete the review of adopted Local Plan policies which covered the period to 2026. A timetable will be agreed shortly in an update to the Local Development Scheme work programme.
- 4.4 The Council is also progressing a range of Supplementary Planning Documents to support the implementation of our new planning strategy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The receipt of a sound Inspectors' Report is a positive endorsement of the Council's work and a major milestone.
- 5.2 The formal adoption of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy would ensure that the Council has an up-to-date policy framework in place to guide future planning decisions within New Forest District, outside of the National Park.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 It is a legal requirement that Local Plans contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, social, economic and environmental. This forms part of the tests of soundness considered at examination. The Local Plan review was informed by preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal including an Equalities Impact Assessment.

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

10.1 The Portfolio Holder supports the recommendations to be made to Council contained within this report.

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Background Papers:

Published documents