

## Cabinet – 5 February 2025

### Local Plan Review – Issues and Scope Consultation Document

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	Approval is sought to undertake public consultation on the Issues and Scope document for six weeks from mid February 2025, in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>It is recommended to the Cabinet that:</b> <b>1. the Local Plan Issues and Scope document be approved for public consultation, attached at Appendix 1 to this report; and</b> <b>2. any final editorial changes to the document prior to publication for consultation be agreed by the Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.</b>
Reasons for recommendation	To allow the Council to move forward to the first stage of consultation for the Local Plan review
Ward(s)	All wards outside the National Park
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Derek Tipp – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy
Strategic Director(s)	James Carpenter – Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability
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## Introduction

1. This report seeks approval for the Issues and Scope consultation document (**Appendix 1**) that will form the basis for public consultation and enable the Council to move forward with the approved programme for the preparation of a new local plan.
2. Cabinet approved a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) in October 2024. This sets out the following programme for preparation of the Local Plan Review:
  - Call for sites: October – December 2024
  - Consultation on a Local Plan review Issues and Scope document: February – March 2025
  - Proposed consultation on the draft Local Plan review: Autumn 2025.
3. The subsequent programme for the preparation of the Local Plan will be determined in due course following consideration of the responses received to this consultation, the preparation of further evidence base studies and in anticipation of there being further clarity on the implications of national policy changes.
4. In respect to the emerging proposals for devolution and associated local government review, the Government has made it clear that local authorities should continue to ensure local plans are kept up-to-date, and progress reviews of their local plans where they are not.

## Background

5. The proposed consultation document is extensive and covers a wide range of issues. It has been prepared by the Planning Policy Team with input from an Officer Working Group and a Member Working Group. The Officer Working Group includes those reliant on local

plan policies for their service delivery (e.g. climate change) and planning-related professionals (e.g. conservation officer).

6. The Local Plan review is a major corporate project and requires the Council to act collectively to meet its statutory and legal responsibilities. It is therefore important to ensure that there is wider Member engagement in, and oversight and scrutiny of, the Local Plan preparation process to maintain ownership and buy in. The Local Plan Member Working Group is a cross-party group made up of 6 Conservative Members, 3 Liberal Democrat Members, 1 Independent Member and 1 Green Party Member established to advise the Cabinet on the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.
7. The Member Working Group has met five times, exploring a range of issues to be considered as part of the Issues and Options consultation, receiving updates to the work on preparing the evidence base and inputting into the proposed work programme. As part of the discussions the group noted the need to consider existing neighbourhood plans.
8. In relation to legislative requirements for furthering the purposes of the New Forest National Park, officers maintain a good working relationship with officers from the National Park Authority. The National Park Authority are expected to be undertaking a similar consultation at a similar time to ensure that messages are consistent and that we continue to work closely. Officers are also aware of the duty to further the purposes of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

### **Structure of the proposed Issues and Scope consultation document**

9. The structure of the document has been designed so that the topics align with the priorities in the Corporate Plan and is set out below.

Foreword
Introduction & background <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan Area</li><li>• What is the Local Plan</li><li>• Role of others</li><li>• Stages of production</li><li>• What is the Issues and Scope document and why we are seeking views</li></ul>
Spatial context <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Forest as a place</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship of Plan Area to National Park and sub-area descriptions</li> </ul> <p>Our current spatial strategy</p> <p>Spatial vision &amp; objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What should the distribution of new development be?</li> <li>Relationship with the New Forest District Council Corporate Plan</li> </ul>	
Topics	
People	<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much housing to plan for</li> <li>Housing mix &amp; affordable housing</li> <li>Housing densities</li> <li>Second home ownership</li> <li>Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople</li> </ul>
	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council's role (also that of the County Council)</li> <li>Digital infrastructure</li> <li>Utilities</li> <li>Social infrastructure</li> <li>The role of culture and art</li> </ul>
	Health and wellbeing
Place	<p>Design (and placemaking)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key principles for good quality and sustainable places and communities</li> </ul>
	<p>Climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing the causes of climate change</li> <li>Adapting to the effects of climate change</li> </ul>
	<p>Natural Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural capital</li> <li>Recreational impacts and nutrients</li> <li>Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain</li> <li>Green and blue infrastructure</li> <li>Landscape character</li> <li>Backup grazing land</li> </ul>
	Green Belt
	<p>Strategic development locations and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of existing strategic site allocations</li> <li>Review of other existing site-specific proposals</li> <li>Potential new strategic site allocations</li> </ul>
	<p>Open space, sport, recreation, and play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach to formal sport</li> <li>Approach to parks, amenity open space and greenspace</li> <li>Approach to equipped play areas</li> </ul>
	Historic environment
Prosperity	Economy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for employment land/floorspace.</li> <li>• Where can employment land/floorspace be delivered?</li> <li>• Solent Freeport and port employment</li> <li>• Protection of employment land</li> <li>• Town and local centre uses</li> <li>• Tourism</li> </ul>
	Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads</li> <li>• Public transport</li> <li>• Travel by water</li> <li>• Active travel</li> </ul>
	Viability
Next steps	

10. Each 'Topic' section is structured in the following format:

- Introduction
- Why does it matter?
- What are the issues?
- Consultation questions.

### **Proposed consultation questions**

11. In order to encourage a wide-ranging audience, the proposed consultation questions have been drafted mindful of representing the challenges before the Council and allowing people to have their say, whilst also framed so as not to give any 'false hopes' of what could be achieved.
12. All questions will be optional, with an opportunity also provided for further comments to be made on the document and raise any further topics that may have been overlooked.

### **Consultation arrangements**

13. Consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement and include engagement with town and parish councils, workshops with key stakeholders and the use of specialist digital engagement software (Go Vocal).
14. Officers also intend to use social media, and the use of short videos, to highlight the topics presented to the Council as part of the Local Plan preparation.
15. Officers intend to hold a series of 'roadshow' events at key locations during the consultation period itself. Full details on how to respond to the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

16. As the New Forest National Park Authority will be undertaking a similar consultation during a similar period, officers will explore whether it may be appropriate to hold joint events.

### **Next Steps**

17. Officers will keep Members informed on the consultation arrangements, and particularly the dates for 'roadshow' events. Work on the development of the evidence base will continue whilst the consultation is carried out and the responses analysed.
18. The revised NPPF and initial devolution and local government reorganisation proposals for strategic planning were published by the government in December. Officers will need to consider the implications for the Local Plan review and discuss these with partner authorities and the Member Working Group in due course.
19. The Local Development Scheme anticipates a rapid timetable for preparation of the draft Local Plan review for consultation in autumn 2025. The Officer and Member Working Groups will be fully engaged in this work before consideration by Cabinet.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

20. The Corporate Plan 2024-28 outlines the vision, values, and priorities for the Council over the next four years.
21. The vision of the Corporate Plan is to secure a better future by supporting opportunities for the people and communities we serve, protecting our unique and special place and securing a vibrant and prosperous New Forest. This has been organised into the thematic areas of People, Place and Prosperity. The Local Plan aligns with all the objectives of the Corporate Plan and the document proposed for public consultation has been drafted by grouping together the various topics under the headings of the Corporate Plan.

### **Options appraisal**

22. The alternative option of pausing the Local Plan review at this time has been considered. This is rejected on the basis that it was against a strong government steer to commence local plan production at pace, and not wait for any potential devolution and local government reorganisation to progress. Further to this, not progressing our Local Plan review would lead to a longer period for the Council in having an out of date Local Plan, which in turn would potentially result in a risk of a greater number of speculative applications for development outside of a plan-led approach.

## **Consultation undertaken**

23. The document and proposed approach to consultation set out in this report and appendix has been discussed with officers, including via the Officer Working Group and with Members through the Member Working Group, together with informal consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

## **Financial and resource implications**

24. Sufficient existing budget provision has been made to cover work on the Local Plan review.

## **Legal implications**

25. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 requires/ provides the legislative framework which requires that Councils should prepare a local plan and keep it up-to-date.

## **Risk assessment**

26. None.

## **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

27. A Local Plan review, as set out in the published Local Development Scheme, is essential if the Council is to stay in control of the planning of its area and ensure a high-quality environment.

## **Equalities implications**

28. None directly from this report.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

29. None directly from this report.

## **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

30. Local Plan engagement, including public consultation, requires the collection and processing of some personal information in a manner compliant with GDPR.

## **New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

31. The New Forest National Park Authority are required to produce and review their own local plan. The timetable proposed by this Council is broadly in line with that of the National Park Authority, therefore

there may be increased opportunities for joint working on evidence studies.

32. There are no specific implications identified for the Cranborne Chase National Landscape in this document, although the topic in relation to furthering the purposes of the National Landscape is covered.

### **Conclusion**

33. The Local Plan review is being undertaken at a time of great change for the planning system, particularly in relation to the provision of housing, potential devolution and local government reorganisation. However, the government is clear with its continued commitment to the plan-led system and expectation that plans will be delivered quickly. The Council will need to move forward quickly to ensure that it can maintain an up-to-date Local Plan, taking account of the comments it received through this consultation in preparing a sound Plan.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Proposed Issues and Scope consultation document

### **Background Papers:**

None.