

Agenda Item 3(a)

Cabinet Date:	6 October 2022
Contact Officer:	Alex Yendole
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Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Special Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee 04/10/2022 Cabinet 06/10/2022
Key Decision:	Yes
Submission by:	Councillor F Beatty, Economic Development and Planning Portfolio

New Local Plan - Preferred Options Report

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To approve the 'New Local Plan - Preferred Options Report' and associated documentation for consultation (attached as **BOOKLETS** to this report) seeking views on key elements of the emerging new Development Plan reflecting changes in national policy and updated evidence base.

Links to **BOOKLETS** to this report:

- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-booklet
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-borough-policy-map
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-stafford-map
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-stone-map
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-meecebrook-and-stafford-station-gateway

- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-large-settlements-inset-maps
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-small-settlements-inset-map
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-recognised-industrial-estates-maps
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-major-developed-sites-inset-maps
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-non-technical-summary
- www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-communications-plan

- 1.2 To recommend that the New Local Plan programme be updated, with the latest revision of the Local Development Scheme brought into effect from 19 October 2022, replacing the existing Scheme published in November 2021.

2 Proposal of Cabinet Member

- 2.1 That the New Local Plan - Preferred Options Report' be approved for public consultation, together with the supporting evidence based documentation referenced in the **APPENDIX** to this item;
- 2.2 That the revised Local Development Scheme be brought into effect from 19 October 2022;
- 2.3 That the Head of Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, be authorised to make appropriate typographical and minor presentational amendments to the Preferred Options Document as may be required.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is important for the Borough Council to make progress on the New Local Plan for Stafford Borough 2020-2040 in order to provide for future development across the Borough through establishing strategic planning policies and specific land allocations.
- 3.2 Since the current Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 was adopted (Part 1 in June 2014 and Part 2 in January 2017) significant changes have occurred locally and nationally impacting upon planning policy. Corporately there is now more of a focus on delivering economic growth, and national policy seeks to ensure that development proposals take into account the effects of change on the built and natural environment.

3.3 The following key areas of work have been completed or are on-going since the New Local Plan process commenced, in order to support the preparation of the Preferred Options Report:

- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report published and consulted upon
- Settlement Assessment questionnaire to Parish Councils processed
- On-going ‘Call for Sites’ exercise launched including in respect of new development, brownfield land and Local Green Space
- Authority Monitoring Report published and evidence gathering from key stakeholders, including confirmation of a 5-year housing land supply
- Analysis of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) to reflect local implications for the New Local Plan process
- Scoping the Issues Report alongside the Settlement Assessment methodology and the associated settlement profiles
- Issues and Options consultation stage supported by a detailed evidence base leading to over 180 individual responses being submitted and published
- Evidence based reports being prepared to support the Preferred Option stage including an assessment of site based ecological, heritage and landscapes issues alongside transport, utilities and education provision. Furthermore, in November 2020 the Borough Council published the Staffordshire County Climate Change and Mitigation study
- Borough Council response to a range of Government consultations on planning reforms and changes to the existing planning system from August 2020 onwards

3.4 In November 2021 the new Local Plan timetable was established through the updated Local Development Scheme. This took into account and reflected revised National Planning Policy Framework requirements, progress on the evidence base including the standardised methodology for housing need applied to Stafford Borough, and the detailed assessment of a potential new Garden Community called Meecebrook to be considered through the statutory planning process. In order to provide the most up-to-date evidence-based information and ensure comprehensive community engagement and consultation, the Preferred Option Report stage is now proposed to occur between October and December 2022. This change in the timetable, if agreed, will be reflected in the updated Local Development Scheme. All other dates will remain unchanged, as set out below:

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Commencement	July 2017 - completed
Issues and Options Report	July 2018 to April 2020 - completed
Preferred Options Report	October to December 2022
Formal publication of the proposed new plan	July to September 2023
Submission of the proposed new plan to the Planning Inspectorate	November 2023

Process Stage	Proposed Completion Date
Examination of the proposed new plan, subject to PINS	February 2024
Adoption of the new local plan	October 2024

- 3.5 If the Preferred Options document is approved, the subsequent public consultation exercise will seek responses from the local community and other key stakeholders. Responses will be sought on the consultation documents between 24 October 2022 and 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022. Please refer to the **BOOKLETS** which contains the Preferred Options report and associated documentation. The **APPENDIX** to this item sets out the latest evidence base to be published alongside the Preferred Options report including a Non-Technical Summary and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
- 3.6 The Preferred Options report comprises of:
- A Vision and set of Objectives
 - Spatial portrait of Stafford Borough
 - Development Strategy and Climate Change
 - Meecebrook Garden Community
 - Site Allocations including Stafford Station Gateway
 - Economy policies and proposals
 - Housing policies and proposals
 - Design and Infrastructure policies
 - Environment policies
 - Connections policies
 - Appendices including Monitoring Framework, open space and car parking standards, Housing Trajectory, and Glossary
- 3.7 Within the Development Strategy section is a settlement hierarchy, which ensures that sustainable locations for new development are identified in respect of the Borough's towns and villages, including the location of new development. The categorisation within the settlement hierarchy and the selection of proposed allocations for development is based on a range of factors including population, recent development activity, highway network, ecological / heritage / landscape considerations, education capacity, key facilities and services as well as accessibility and technology.
- 3.8 A New Local Plan proposed settlement hierarchy will replace the existing adopted Plan for Stafford Borough (June 2014) Settlement Hierarchy of Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages, and introduces 5 new categories (tabled below). For each category the proposed levels of new housing development expressed as a percentage of overall new housing numbers are shown. Please note that the % figures identify the proportion of housing delivered through the New Local Plan including existing and proposed allocations, completions since 1 April 2020 and current commitments as at 31 March 2022.

Tier	Settlement Category	Description
1	Stafford (59%)	The largest urban area in the Borough with a regionally significant service centre role providing employment, retail and other facilities, and a key role in driving growth. This also includes Baswich, Berkswich, Doxey and Walton-on-the-Hill
2	Stone (7%)	The second largest town in the Borough providing employment, retail and other facilities for a wider area
3	Meecebrook Garden Community (24%)	New settlement location north-east of Eccleshall and south west of Yarnfield and Cold Meece.
4	Larger Settlements (4%)	Large villages of 250 or more dwellings which act as key service centres for the surrounding rural area by virtue of the range of services and facilities they possess. This includes Barlaston, Blythe Bridge, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Great Haywood, Haughton, Hixon, Little Haywood and Colwich, Meir Heath / Rough Close, Weston, Woodseaves and Yarnfield
5	Smaller Settlements (Less than 1%)	Villages of between 50 and 249 dwellings which tend to have a lesser provision of services than larger villages with a definable village nucleus (ie not dispersed or ribbon development). This includes Adbaston, Aston-By-Stone, Bradley, Brocton, Brocton A34, Church Eaton, Clayton, Cold Meece, Cotes Heath, Creswell, Croxton, Derrington, Fulford, Great Bridgeford, Hilderstone, Hopton, Hyde Lea, Milford, Milwich, Moreton, Norbury, Norton Bridge, Ranton, Salt, Seighford, Swynnerton and Tittensor.

3.9 In terms of the rest of the Borough (ie settlements and areas not identified in the Settlement Hierarchy) this area / these locations will contribute limited housing to the overall housing requirement such as through the re-use of rural buildings (less than 1%) alongside predicted windfall planning consents at 50 dwellings per year (6%). Please note that percentages have been rounded.

4 Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives

- 4.1 The New Local Plan will help deliver the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2021-2024 key objectives:

"To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs."

"To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing."

"To continue work towards our Climate Change and Green Recovery objectives, integrating them into our activities and strategic plans"

"To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives."

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published, and subsequently updated in February 2019 and July 2021. Alongside updates to the NPPF was additional information provided via Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which sets out the national context for preparing policies in new Local Plans. The purpose of planning was re-stated being to 'achieve sustainable development', with this approach amplified through core planning principles and a general approach requiring that Local Plans should bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in appropriate locations to meet objectively assessed needs.
- 5.2 The Borough Council previously consulted on a New Local Plan Issues and Options report between February and April 2020, extended due to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 181 responses were received through this consultation stage and which are available to view on our website www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-stafford-borough-local-plan-2020-2040-issues-and-options-responses, with a detailed summary to be published alongside the Preferred Options Report as part of the New Local Plan evidence.
- 5.3 If the Preferred Options document is agreed, the consultation stage will last for approximately 7 weeks, to take account of the October half term holiday break. It will run from Monday 24 October until 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022 and involve the following actions to reflect the Council's agreed Statement of Community Involvement:
- Notification to Parish Councils, Members and key stakeholders of publication of the documents and an opportunity to submit responses.

- Copies of the documents provided for viewing at all libraries in the Borough and at the Civic Centre.
- Availability to view the documents and the related evidence base via the Council's website.
- Public exhibitions / drop in events to be held across the Borough area
- A Parish Councils engagement event
- The opportunity to make representations via the website, by email or on paper.
- Publication of a Press notice / release

5.4 In terms of subsequent steps, the Local Plan evidence base will be updated and alongside consideration of comments made on the Preferred Options report, a draft version of the new Local Plan produced in due course (known as the Publication version). This publication version of the Plan will, subject to member approval, represent the Council's intended Local Plan. On approval it will then be subject to a statutory six week period when interested parties can support or object to its contents.

5.5 Post Publication and the receipt of representations, the New Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State along with all the comments received. The Secretary of State will then, via the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), set up an independent Examination process before an Inspector to determine if the Plan is 'appropriate' based on the NPPF's latest tests of soundness. Following the Examination process and receipt of the Inspectors' Report the Council will hope to adopt the New Local Plan, which will replace the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The exercise of formulating a new Local Plan was allocated a total budget of £536,000 in July 2017. Following delays and the impact of the pandemic, an additional £191,430 has been identified as being required to meet revised anticipated costs. Due to the three year proposed delay, £97,500 of this increase has been funded from the Council's annual contributions of £32,500 per annum, together with £30,000 to cover additional costs relating to the pandemic. This leaves a balance of £63,930 to be funded. This outstanding balance has been allocated monies in principle from the planning fee reserve. Delivery of the New Local Plan is envisaged to come within the revised resources available as outlined above and in the table below.

The main costs incurred in preparing and finalising the New Local Plan include the evidence base, community engagement and consultation, and the independent Examination process prior to adoption.

The financial implications of updating the New Local Plan programme through the Local Development Scheme are that funds will now be spent in subsequent financial years than previously planned. Please refer to the table below.

Local Plan Revised Budget

	Original Plan July 2019 £	Revised Plan Oct 2021 £	Variance £
2017/18 (Actual Expenditure)	0	36,367	36,367
2018/19 (Actual Expenditure)	54,700	54,734	34
2019/20 (Actual Expenditure)	162,200	170,000	7,800
2020/21 (Actual Expenditure)	118,100	26,667	-91,433
2021/22	75,000	130,726	55,726
2022/23	100,000	189,055	89,055
2023/24	0	29,879	29,879
2024/25	0	90,000	90,000
Contingency	26,000	0	-26,000
Total	536,000	727,428	191,428

6.2 Legal

The New Local Plan has to be prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning Acts and regulations, and be aligned with related national planning policy and guidance. The Plan will need in accordance with the Council's constitution to be formally endorsed by Full Council prior to publication and on adoption. The Preferred Options stage is not a statutory requirement but follows good practice guidance and will help inform the development of the statutory Publication version of the Local Plan in due course.

6.3 Human Resources

The New Local Plan will be delivered by existing staff from within the Development Service and the wider organisation, together with support from specialist consultants.

6.4 Human Rights Act

None identified

6.5 Data Protection

Consultation responses to be subject to the latest General Data Protection Regulations brought into effect from May 2018.

6.6 Risk Management

An adopted local plan for Stafford Borough is in place. However, there is a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to review Local Plans and ensure policies are up to date. For plans to be reviewed and kept up to date. A delay and / or uncertainty at the local level without a new Local Plan being produced could lead to legal challenges and / or planning appeals with potential significant costs for the Council.

Whilst the Council will seek to ensure that the New Local Plan is progressed in accordance with the latest timetable and minimise any risks of delay it should be noted that the following external factors are beyond the Council's control and may have an impact:

- Changes in Government legislation, regulations and policy
- Unanticipated scale and nature of consultation responses received including new evidence submitted unexpectedly
- Failure of key partners and other agencies to deliver evidence on time and make responses to key elements of the process
- Unanticipated delays in external events such as resource capacity of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for the Examination process or failure to deliver robust arrangements for this process

It should be noted that the following risks can be considered and effectively managed by the Council:

- Staff turnover, recruitment difficulties and sickness absences leading to inadequate skills base
- Political changes, procedural delays or failure to meet Council deadlines
- Non-conformity and failure in the tests of soundness for new planning policy documents

6.7 Community Impact Assessment Recommendations

Impact on Public Sector Equality Duty:

The New Local Plan 2020-2040 will provide clear guidance to developers and also members of the public through planning policies and proposals in across the Borough. This will enable any resident or business to see the requirements related to future development. There are no direct impacts identified for Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation at this stage.

Wider Community Impact:

Working from a consistent evidence base through the Borough Council and with partners, ensures that Community Impact Assessment recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2020-2040 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes. Specific reference will be made when details of the New Local Plan 2020-2040 are made available.

The New Local Plan will deliver a statutory development plan which is designed to be inclusive to all residents and those interested in planning the future for the Borough.

Throughout the process of preparing the New Local Plan a thorough consultation and engagement process will enable residents and interested parties to be involved in its preparation, including 24/7 access to key documents through the Borough Council's web-site

7 Previous Consideration

Cabinet - 4 November 2021 - Minute No CAB31/21

Cabinet - 16 January 2020 - Minute No CAB71/20

8 Background Papers

File available in Development Services

Cabinet Date: 6 October 2022

New Local Plan - Preferred Options Report

Evidence Base and Non Technical Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this Appendix note is to set out the evidence base and supporting information being made available for publication alongside the New Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options Report consultation including the following:

- Non Technical Summary: Please see attached **BOOKLET**.
www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-non-technical-summary
- Communications Plan. Please see attached **BOOKLET**.
www.staffordbc.gov.uk/special-EDP-4-october-2022-new-local-plan-preferred-options-communications-plan

In addition, the following evidence base / supporting information will also be published as part of the engagement / consultation stage for the New Local Plan preferred option via the web-page link below:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-lp-2020-2040-evidence-base

- Ecological Sites Assessment
- Heritage Sites Assessment
- Landscape Character Sites Assessment
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Whole Plan Viability Assessment - Stage 1
- Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report
- Habitat Regulations Assessment: Stage 2
- Summary of responses to the New Local Plan Issues and Options consultation
- Site Assessment Profiles
- Topic Paper on Housing and Employment Land
- Topic Paper on Site Selection process
- Topic Paper on Revised Settlement Assessment and Profiles
- Topic Paper on Lead in and Build Rate Assumptions
- Topic Paper on Local Green Space Designations
- Topic Paper on Climate Change
- Topic Paper on Biodiversity
- Topic Paper on Green Infrastructure and Open Space
- Topic Paper on Renewable Energy
- Topic Paper on Connections

It should be noted that the following evidence base has previously been published to support the New Local Plan process available via the following web-page link:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-lp-2020-2040-evidence-base

- Economic and Housing Development Needs Assessment
- Town Centre Capacity Assessment
- Reasonable Alternatives / Strategic Development Options
- Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report
- Habitat Regulations Assessment: Stage 1
- Nature Recovery Network
- Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment
- Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2022 update
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy
- Settlement Hierarchy

The following links are available to other elements of the New Local Plan evidence base and supporting information through the Stafford Borough Council website:

Local Plans and Policies webpages:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-plan-and-policies

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/lp

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-local-plan-

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment: Level 1 - November 2019

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/water-management-and-flooding

Please note that further work on the Water Cycle Study will be progressed following the Preferred Options stage to assess sites identified for allocation

Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sport Facilities - July 2019

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/open-space-sport-and-recreation

Statement of Community Involvement - November 2018

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/statement-of-community-involvement

Local Development Scheme - October 2022

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/local-development-scheme