
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22 January 2015
Subject: Plan-making Programme - the Local Development Scheme
Report of: Cllr Young , Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Summary: The report proposes that Members endorse the Local Development Scheme 2015 which sets out the scope and timetable for the production of future local plans for Central Bedfordshire, including specific reference to the Development Strategy, the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and an Allocations Local Plan. These documents will refresh, update and roll forward the planning policy framework in Central Bedfordshire.

Advising Officer: Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration and Business
Contact Officer: Sally Chapman, Development Plan Process Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The Plan-Making Programme - Local Development Scheme is the project plan which sets out the timetable for planning documents which are integral to the delivery of three of the Council's priorities:-
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
 - Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
 - Better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport.

Financial:

2. The scale of the Council's investment in Local Plans should be seen in the context of the scale of new investment in Central Bedfordshire, including commercial and business investment, infrastructure investment and investment in new homes and services that they will enable. In addition, the New Homes Bonus Scheme seeks to provide a powerful local incentive to support the development of new homes. A Development Strategy document will also enable a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be produced that will help lever in funding for new infrastructure to support development. Grant income from government is available to help resource Neighbourhood Planning.

3. The first phase of the Development Strategy has been completed. The next phase is Examination, covering the Programme Officer and the Planning Inspectorate's costs. The Allocations Local Plan work in 2014/15 will mainly involve officer time and can be met within existing budgets. The Examination should take place in 2016/17. The Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan was withdrawn and the process will need to begin again.
4. The current budget includes an efficiency saving of £150K. There is a further budget reduction of £100k and £150k in 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively.
5. Producing Local Plans is a statutory requirement and the Medium Term Financial Plan takes into account the requirements both to prepare them and conduct examination hearings into their soundness. The service will continue to look at the most cost effective ways of preparing the documents.

Legal:

6. Planning is a statutory function under various Acts including the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 and Localism Act 2011. Once adopted the documents included within the plan-making programme will form part of the statutory Development Plan and will be the basis for consideration of planning applications. Until this happens the existing adopted documents will continue to set the planning framework.

Risk Management:

7. The process of producing a Development Strategy and other planning policy documents is long and complex. High quality project management and risk management skills will be required. Project teams are in place to oversee the work and risk management is part of the process of management. A risk assessment, along with mitigating actions is contained within the Plan Making Programme.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

8. Staff resources to undertake this project are largely in place. Any resource required can be accommodated within the existing staff structures and budgets.

Equalities/Human Rights:

9. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. The main documents set out in the Local Development Scheme are each subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Public Health

11. The Development Strategy could have a number of benefits in terms of public health and wellbeing. There is a specific section of the document that seeks to summarise the interactions between strategic planning and public health. These include promoting healthy lifestyles through enabling walking and cycling and through appropriate leisure and open space provision. Health infrastructure and securing appropriate developer contributions towards such provision are also important aspects, in association with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Community Safety:

12. The Council has a statutory duty to do all that it reasonably can to address community safety across all of its functions. Plan-making has an indirect influence on community safety, setting out policy to deliver appropriate provision of community infrastructure and to ensure that individual development proposals take account of community safety issues.

Sustainability:

13. Sustainable development is at the heart of all the strategic and local planning documents produced. All Local Plans are subject to a specific Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) in order to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Procurement:

14. Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to Endorse and Recommend to Executive to:-

- 1. Support the preparation of the three Local Plans (Development Strategy, Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and Allocations Local Plan) and other associated documents**
- 2. Note the amendment to the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan Timetable and agree the attached programme of plan-making which sets out the formal Local Development Scheme for the whole of Central Bedfordshire.**

Background

15. In terms of planning policy there remains a separate statutory framework between the northern and southern parts of Central Bedfordshire, derived from the arrangements of the legacy authorities. In the northern part of Central Bedfordshire, formerly Mid Bedfordshire District, there is an adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and a Site Allocations Development Plan Document. In the southern part, previously South Bedfordshire District, there is the South Beds Local Plan Review 2004.
16. Before 1st April 2012, formal responsibility for planning policy making was with the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee. Following the withdrawal of the Joint Core Strategy in July 2011 and dissolution of the Joint Committee, Central Bedfordshire has been preparing the Development Strategy, a single plan covering the whole of Central Bedfordshire. Similarly, the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, and the Allocations Local Plan will also cover the whole area.
17. The previous Plan-Making Programme, endorsed by Executive on the 22nd April 2014, needs to be amended as it is now out of date due to the changes in the Gypsy & Traveller Local Plan timetable.

Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

18. This document has been delayed from its original programme following its formal withdrawal from examination by Executive on the 19th August 2014.
19. The new programme is set out in the Plan-Making Programme 2015. The key stages are:
 - 'Call for sites' June to July 2015
 - Initial Draft of document and all sites consultation October/November 2015
 - Pre-Submission Draft consultation September/October 2016
 - Submit for Examination June 2017
 - Examination Hearings October 2017
 - Adoption February 2018
20. This delay will result in a proportion of previously allocated expenditure falling in 2016/17 instead of 2014/15.

Development Strategy & Allocations Local Plan

21. The programmes for these documents remain unchanged from the 2014 Plan-making Programme.

Conclusion and Next Steps

22. Members are asked to recommend that Executive agrees the plan-making programme and endorses the production of the three Local Plans.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Plan-Making Programme – a local development scheme for Central Bedfordshire.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None