

Report to Council – 17 October 2017

Report of Cabinet 11 September 2017

Cabinet met on 11 September 2017. The minutes are published on the Council's website.

The following Members were present at the meeting:

Present: Mayor Dorothy Thornhill
Councillor Peter Taylor
Councillor Karen Collett
Councillor Stephen Johnson
Councillor Iain Sharpe
Councillor Mark Watkin

Also present: Councillor Nigel Bell

The following was a recommendation to Council:

23 Local Plan Review 2016-2036

Cabinet received a report of the Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and Corporate Performance.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report, explaining that it was being proposed to focus resources on progressing the Local Plan Review 2016-2036. This followed recent evidence suggesting that the need for homes and jobs was much higher than planned in the Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy. Separate to this, an appeal decision in April 2017 had brought into question the council's five year housing supply. As a consequence, it had become apparent that the council needed to revise its housing supply to reflect the more recent objectively assessed need figures.

Work undertaken in preparation for Local Plan Part 2 would not be wasted as it would feed directly into the preparation of the plan review which was already underway.

Councillor Sharpe emphasised the scale of work ahead and the need to engage with the community to shape the future development of the town. He acknowledged Watford Borough Council's duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities and partners, and emphasised the need for the council to shape its policy and direction and not be subject to planning by appeal.

The Deputy Managing Director confirmed that the South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Economic Study suggested that the objectively assessed need for homes in Watford was 577 per year. This compared with 260 per year proposed in the Core Strategy. However, in response to confusion and inconsistency in methods being used to calculate these figures, the Government would be introducing a standard methodology. This was expected in the next six months. The Deputy Managing Director advised that the figure could change as the most up to date analysis of the evidence would be needed.

Councillor Bell questioned how the recent Ascot Road planning permission would impact on the five year housing supply. The Deputy Managing Director confirmed that this had contributed to a current 5 year supply, however the figure was not static and likely to fluctuate over time.

The Mayor acknowledged comments from Cabinet about the need to balance demands for further housing against significant traffic problems around the town. Questions of density and traffic congestion were key and required the council to be robust in defence of its limited geographical space.

RESOLVED –

That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Local Plan Part 2 is not submitted for examination and that resources should now be focussed on progressing the Local Plan Review to cover the period 2016-2036.