

Part A

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: 19 March 2019

Report author: Spatial Planning Manager

Title: Local Development Scheme: Timetable for the Watford Local Plan Review 2018-2021

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the subject, scope and timetable for the preparation of Development Plan Documents. The LDS includes the Local Plan which will set out the growth strategy, policies to guide planning decisions and identify sites for development.
- 1.2 The LDS will cover a three year period from 2018 to 2021 when the Local Plan is anticipated to be completed. It supersedes the previous version adopted in April 2016 which covered the period 2016-2019 and the preparation of the now discontinued Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies.
- 1.3 The Local Development Scheme is a legal requirement. It provides certainty for the council, external stakeholders and the community about how the Local Plan will be prepared. The Cabinet is asked to support the document and recommend that it be taken to council for adoption.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)

Changes in national policy and regulations which require a significant alteration to emerging plan content.	Delays to Local Plan preparation, redrafting of content, potential delays requiring updates to the evidence base.	Highlight issues and concerns through responses to Government consultations. Access external support from agencies such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).	Tolerate	8
Delays associated with preparation of the Local Plan and Joint Spatial Plan, evidence bases and changes to national planning guidance leading to missed key milestones.	Delays to Local Plan preparation.	This can be mitigated through good project management, project coordination through shared resources and setting out clear objectives with regular dialogue between authorities. Can be supported by joint working on evidence bases. Regular engagement with the political process and stakeholders to ensure all parties understand the process as much as possible. Key issues can be highlighted to the Government through consultation responses.	Treat	6
Failure to agree critical cross boundary strategic planning issues with prescribed Duty to Co-operate bodies.	Delays to Local Plan preparation and a disjointed approach to development in the wider area that may not maximise opportunities	This will require continued and regular engagement with key stakeholders and retaining an up to date evidence base.	Treat	9

	and increase political issues.			
Loss of staff, experience and continuity.	Delays to Local Plan preparation.	Loss of staff can be mitigated through the appointment of temporary staff and commissioning of consultants although this has budgetary issues. Undertaking exit interviews can help to clarify and understand issues. The Local Development Scheme timetable will be monitored and amendments can be considered.	Treat	8
Pressure on financial resources	Preparing a Local Plan will incur financial costs. Reducing funding pots and competing priorities are increasing the pressure on financial resources available to support the production of a local plan.	This can be mitigated by being proactive to identifying costs early in the project, ensure a coordinated approach between council officers, teams and elected Members to make effective use of resources available and deliver mutually inclusive corporate objectives. Commissioning evidence bases jointly with neighbouring authorities can improve efficiency and reduce cost. Access grant funding and other external financial sources of finance can supplement in-house funding.	Tolerate	9
Local Plan found	Significant delays to	Ensure evidence base is robust and up to	Treat	6

'unsound' or legal challenges	adopting the Local Plan.	date. To mitigate the potential for an unsound Plan will require working collaboratively with external stakeholders, statutory consultees, and neighbouring authorities as part of the Joint Strategic Plan. Obtain legal advice when required.		
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3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That council adopts the Local Development Scheme.

3.2 That, minor updates to the Local Development Scheme can be made by the Deputy Managing Director consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development.

Further information contact:

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Report approved by: Nick Fenwick, Deputy Managing Director

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out what the Local Plan will cover and the timetable for its preparation. It is a public document and one that is referred to in the examination process. The proposed LDS is set out as Appendix A to this report.

4.2 At examination, an independently appointed Planning Inspector will consider whether the Local Plan document being examined has been prepared in accordance with the latest LDS. This forms part of the assessment of soundness. It is therefore important that the scope and preparation timetable are both accurate and achievable, given available resources, and potential changes to those resources.

- 4.3 The proposed LDS sets out a timetable for completing the new Local Plan. This will replace the Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy adopted in 2013 and any remaining “saved” policies from the Watford District Plan 2000 adopted in 2003.
- 4.4 Local Plans are required to be no older than five years to be considered up to date. The Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) adopted in 2013 no longer meets this requirement. Additionally, local authorities are required to work constructively and collaboratively when preparing a new Local Plan. Work has already begun on the evidence to inform the Local Plan review including several jointly commissioned studies with other authorities in the South West Hertfordshire area. Additionally, Watford and the other South West Hertfordshire authorities have agreed to work collaboratively on a Joint Strategic Plan to address cross boundary issues related to future growth.
- 4.5 The LDS sets out a timetable for a review of the Local Plan to ensure it remains up to date. It is anticipated the new Local plan will be completed in spring/summer 2021.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 There is an agreed annual budget of approximately £300,000 to support Local Plan preparation (including officer time). It is estimated that around £75,000 per year will be required for the evidence studies and sustainability appraisal and engagement programme. It is also anticipated that a further £150,000 will be required for examination costs (including legal support); any budget shortfall will be met from the Planning Fee Income.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that it is a requirement that the LDS is approved by council.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

- 5.3.1 Having had regard to the council’s obligations under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, it is considered that No equalities impact has been identified in relation to the scope and preparation timetable of the Local Plan. The Local Plan documents will be subject to equalities impact assessment as they are prepared.

5.4 **Data Protection Impact Assessment**

5.4.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.5 **Staffing**

5.5.1 The team currently has the staff resources available to deliver the Local Plan to the time table set out in the Local Development Scheme.

5.6 **Sustainability**

5.6.1 Progressing the Local Plan will help the council to make decisions on planning applications to help achieve sustainable development. The Local Plan documents themselves will be subject to separate sustainability appraisals.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Local Development Scheme: A time table for Watford Local plan Review 2018-21

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.