

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 5 July 2021

Report author: Spatial Planning Manager

Title: Local Development Scheme: Timetable for the New Watford Local Plan

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, adopted in March 2019 and last revised on 13 October 2020, has been reviewed to update the timetable for the different stages of preparing the new Local Plan leading to its anticipated adoption in June 2022. The revised LDS will cover a period from 2018 to 2022 and supersedes the timetable set out in the current LDS.
- 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)
Local Development Scheme not	Challenged by Planning Inspector at	Engagement with members and corporate officers	Treat	6

kept up to date	the Local Plan examination. Local community not kept informed of progress on the Local Plan.	about progress on the Local Plan and compliance with the set timetable.		
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3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council the Local Plan timetable, attached as Appendix A, be adopted.
- 3.2 Cabinet recommends to Council that, minor updates to the Local Development Scheme be delegated to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services.

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Report approved by: Ben Martin, Head of Planning and Development

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 The proposed LDS presented is a revised version of that adopted in October 2020. This is to update the timetable reflecting discussions with the Planning Inspectorate and Planning Officers Society who have suggested the timetable for the Examination will take longer than set out in the current LDS given available resources. The primary change made to the document is to the timetable for adoption of the new Local Plan to June 2022 with the submission of the final draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State at the end of July 2021.

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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 June 2022.

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, of which much of this has already been committed. 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.
- 5.1.2 The Shared Director of Finance comments that any financial implications will be met from existing budgets.

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the LDS must be approved by Council and is a legal requirement as part of the Local Plan development process.

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.

6.0 **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Local Development Scheme: Timetable for the New Watford Local Plan

7.0 **Background papers**

7.1 No papers were used in the preparation of this report.