

Report to Council – 19 July 2021

Report of Cabinet – 5 July 2021

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
Councillor Dychton (Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Community)
Councillor Johnson (Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services)
Councillor Pattinson (Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing)
Councillor Stotesbury (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability)
Councillor Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources)

Also present: Councillor Bell, Labour Group Leader
Councillor Turmaine, Chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee

Officers: Managing Director
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Head of Planning and Development
Spatial Planning Manager
Democratic Services Manager

There was the following recommendation to Council.

18. Watford Local Plan Submission Document

Cabinet received a report of the Spatial Planning Manager which included the draft Watford Local Plan and proposed modifications. Cabinet was asked to review the documents which would then be forwarded to Council for final approval.

The Mayor invited Councillor Johnson to introduce the report.

Councillor Johnson informed members that the draft Watford Local Plan had been developed over seven years and had involved many people. It was an important document for the council to have and it was not possible for the authority to move forward without it in place. The draft Local Plan addressed the housing targets. It set out the council's approach to delivering new development and the policies included as part of the draft Local Plan would be used to determine planning applications.

Councillor Johnson explained that the policies had been informed by a comprehensive evidence base, which was available on the council's website. A number of the background studies had been completed jointly with other

south west Hertfordshire authorities. This ensured that strategic issues were understood in a wider context across the council's boundaries. The document had been developed in several stages and comments had helped to shape the draft Local Plan. The draft Local Plan was accompanied by proposed modifications that would be put forward to the Planning Inspector for consideration as part of the Examination in Public.

The Mayor invited the Spatial Planning Manager to add further comments.

The Spatial Planning Manager added that the Planning Inspector would review the proposed modifications alongside the draft Local Plan. Some of the proposed modifications suggested were to amend the plan period from 2018-2036 to 2021-2037, including the Watford General Hospital as part of site allocation MU21 and the approach to fast food takeaways had been revised to require a Health Impact Assessment alongside a planning application rather than having a broad restriction on takeaway establishments located near education facilities which could be difficult to implement. The team was working with Historic England to undertake Heritage Impact Assessments on several sites to clarify potential impact of new development and identify appropriate mitigation measures that may be required. The team was working with a number of landowners on several site allocations objecting to the draft Local Plan on soundness grounds. Results of this work would also be submitted to the Inspector.

Councillor Bell stressed the importance of working with neighbouring authorities and the county council. He noted that some ex-John Lewis stores were being put forward for retail and residential development. He asked whether there were any similar plans for the Watford site.

It was noted that John Lewis no longer had any connections to the Watford site in Atria. The Spatial Planning Manager advised that a consultation response had been submitted to the council suggesting the south part of the former intu shopping centre could be redeveloped for housing as part of the draft Local Plan. However, this was not considered suitable and not put forward as a proposed modification. In response to Councillor Bell's first comment, the officer explained that the council had been working with its neighbouring authorities on strategic planning issues across the area for some time. Part of this work included the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan that was being progressed.

RESOLVED –

That, Cabinet recommends to Council:

1. To agree the final draft Watford Local Plan, attached at Appendix A, and the Final Draft Watford Local Plan inclusive of proposed modifications (track changes), attached as Appendix B, be submitted to the Secretary of State Housing and Local Government for Examination in Public.
2. That, any minor updates to the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications and Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications can be made by the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services.
3. That, delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services, to undertake consultation on the Schedule of Main Modifications and Schedule of Minor Modifications, as recommended by the appointed Planning Inspector following the Examination in Public