

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

07 March 2017

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

This report provides Members with an update on the preparation of the Local Plan including an overview of the responses to the Regulation 18 consultations that closed in November and looking forward to the next stages of Plan making.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The last Local Plan update to this Board was provided for the meeting of 15th November 2016, 10 days before the close of the Regulation 18 consultation exercise on the 25th. At that time it was reported that some 300 responses had been received. By the close on the 25th this had grown to 1,319 responses.

1.1.2 Due to the volume of responses received towards the end of the consultation period and the complexity of many, the process of summarising the comments, identifying key themes and carefully considering the points made has taken longer than was anticipated. This task is now nearing completion. Consequently, this update report will focus on setting out the next stages of the process and the implications of the proposed planning reforms in the recently published Housing White Paper.

1.2 Outstanding Tasks

1.2.1 Once the responses have been carefully considered a view can be taken as to whether any changes to the proposed strategy set out in the Way Forward document might be necessary. This would then form the basis of a further report to the Board together with recommendations for progressing to the next stage of Plan making. This would be accompanied by a summary of the consultation responses and if necessary a revised Local Plan timetable.

1.2.2 It is anticipated that this will be presented at a future scheduled meeting of the Board in either June or July. A revised timetable for the Local Plan is attached for Members' information and approval at **[Annex 1]**.

- 1.2.3 Evidence for the Local Plan either in preparation or in need of a refresh will continue in parallel with the Plan making process. This will include the VISUM modelling of the A20 corridor commissioned with Kent Highways and Amey expected to be made available in April, ongoing discussions with key infrastructure providers that will form the basis of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and whole plan viability testing. The evidence that will be considered for a refresh will include the Employment Land Review, completed in December 2014.

1.3 Implications arising from the Housing White Paper

- 1.3.1 The long awaited Housing White Paper was published on 7th February and as speculated contains another set of wide ranging planning reforms, some of which will have implications for Local Plans (for more details see report on this agenda).
- 1.3.2 Some Local Planning Authorities put their Local Plans on hold in the months leading up to the publication in anticipation of the changes that could have an impact on how Local Plans are prepared, but the underlying message in the White Paper is that Local Plans should be adopted as soon as possible to positively plan to meet identified needs in an area and remove uncertainty.
- 1.3.3 Amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework to require every Local Planning Authority area in England to have a Plan in place and review those plans within five years, together with new legislation in the form of the Neighbourhood Planning Bill to enhance the Secretary of State's powers of intervention in Local Plan processes if progress is not being made are strong messages from the Government that Local Plans should be progressed swiftly.
- 1.3.4 Some of the proposals in the White Paper will come into force almost immediately, others will be implemented through emerging legislation, new regulations or the anticipated review of the NPPF this autumn. Other proposals will be subject to further consultation before the Government decides on what action to take. Unfortunately this will result in some uncertainty surrounding National Planning Policy and planning processes in the meantime.
- 1.3.5 Generally, the approach we have adopted in preparing the Local Plan is in line with the measures being proposed in the White Paper, which is encouraging. However, the proposals are so wide ranging that almost inevitably some could potentially delay the process, for example the proposal for a standardised methodology for calculating objectively assessed housing needs.
- 1.3.6 The message is clear that Local Authorities should press on with their Local Plans and this will be taken into account in the next report to the Board.

1.4 Next Stages

- 1.4.1 Subject to completing the outstanding tasks described in section 1.2 of this report, a further report will be brought back to this Board summarising the results of the consultation exercise and proposing recommendations for taking forward the

Local Plan. This will include an indication of what the draft Local Plan might look like taking into account among other things, the proposals in the Housing White Paper. This will clearly be an important stage for Members that will shape the content of the Plan, both in terms of determining the preferred development allocations and the policy areas that will be covered.

- 1.4.2 There will also be an opportunity to provide an update on progress made in respect of the evidence base.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 It is important that the Local Authority has an up to date development plan for the purposes of long term future planning and determining planning applications.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this information report. These will be revisited in the next report to the Board. Financial implications arising from the Housing White Paper have been addressed in a different report on this agenda.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 The risks associated with failing to prepare and keep up to date a robust, sound Local Plan include, loss of local control over development decisions, an increasing number of successful appeals and possible intervention by the Secretary of State.

1.8 Recommendation

- 1.8.1 That the update on the Local Plan progress be **NOTED** and that the revised timetable at Annex 1 be agreed.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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