

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>From: Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning</b>	<b>Report Number: MC/17/12</b>
<b>To: Babergh Council Mid Suffolk Council</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 18 July 2017 20 July 2017</b>

### CONSULTATION ON THE BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK JOINT LOCAL PLAN

#### 1. Purpose of Report

To approve the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document (July 2017).

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document (July 2017) appended to this report be approved.
- 2.2 That the Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, be authorised to make consequential amendments to the consultation document arising from:
  - (i) the outcomes of the Sustainability Appraisal of the document,
  - (ii) removal of drafting and technical errors and typing mistakes, and
  - (iii) improvements to the layout of the document necessitated by printing requirements.
- 2.3 That consultation on the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document (July 2017) be commenced.

#### 3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the immediate decisions involved in this report. However, the production of the Joint Local Plan commits the Councils to considerable ongoing expenditure, which is met from within existing service budgets for the production of technical evidence (especially through consultancy work) and for drafting of the Joint Local Plan documents. The combined total budget for the Joint Local Plan for the current financial year is £233,970 (exclusive of staffing and overheads).
- 3.2 There will be “one off” costs to be found particularly in connection with the submission of the Joint Local Plan for Examination. This is mainly incurred in publicity, printing the final documents and meeting the costs of the Inspector and the Programme Officer at the Examination.

- 3.3 It is estimated that most of the costs of producing the Joint Local Plan will be felt in the current financial year (2017/18) and the following financial year (2018/19). The costs associated with producing the Plan in the current year are mainly for completing the Councils' evidence base, drafting and consulting on the new document and testing of growth options, particularly through transport modelling and viability testing.
- 3.4 The expected costs in 2018/19 will be in consequence of printing the submission version of the Joint Local Plan and holding the independent Examination, including further modelling/testing and public consultation. These costs will be identified through the budget setting process.

#### 4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare Local Plans. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the procedures to be followed in the preparation of such Plans. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document (July 2017) is being consulted on under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 Planning law requires that where Development Plan policies are relevant to planning applications, decisions in determining these must be made in accordance with the adopted Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The legal planning decision framework therefore relies on Councils having a Development Plan in place.

#### 5. Risk Management

- 5.1 This report relates to a number of risks on the Significant Risk Register which include 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2d, 3a and 3b. The key risks related to production of the Joint Local Plan are described below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
There are a number of factors that could delay production of the Local Plan, including changes to Government policy or the Councils not endorsing the proposed consultation. If production of the Local Plan is delayed then there are risks in relation to not having policies and allocations in place to deliver planned growth, lack of certainty to	Unlikely (2) – Delays can usually be predicted and mitigated.	Bad (3) – Impact would be likely to be long lasting, potentially involving production of the plan being removed from the Councils.	Robust project plan (LDS) produced (March 2017) and monitoring now introduced. Councils to endorse commencement of consultation as per this report.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
communities, lack of 5 year land supply and potential for CLG to intervene in production of the Local Plan.			
If there continues to be increased demand for Neighbourhood Plans there will be continuing demands on resources and increasing complexity with Local Plan production.	Probable (3) – significant increase in interest in function and requirements to produce Neighbourhood Plans over last year.	Noticeable (2) – Impact could become significant as coordination of increasing numbers of plans increases complexity and risk.	Implementation of measures recommended by Joint Scrutiny Committee.
If there is a poor consultation process then there could be a lack of effective engagement with communities.	Highly Unlikely (1) – consultation will be carried out in line with the Statement of Community Involvement.	Noticeable (2) – Impact could be significant if poor consultation leads to lack of confidence in the Councils or results in additional time/cost at Examination.	Consultation to be carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement – also see consultation section below.

## 6. Consultations

- 6.1 The new Joint Local Plan is being developed in an inclusive and collaborative way by officers working closely with Members, with communities and with adjacent Local Planning Authorities/statutory organisations/other relevant infrastructure providers, all of whom either must be engaged through the requirements of “Duty to Cooperate” under Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 or who participate in the planning process as part of their core business.
- 6.2 In particular, officers and Members have been active over the last year in engaging with Neighbourhood Planning Groups to ensure that the relationship of the Joint Local Plan to emerging and prospective Neighbourhood Plans is understood. A programme of ongoing support is being developed to ensure that growing interest in this area of planning is being properly managed.
- 6.3 Officers will continue to work closely with Members and local communities when the consultation draft of the Joint Local Plan is published for consultation. All consultation will be carried out to comply with or exceed the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and joint communications strategies.

- 6.4 Consultation and engagement on this version of the Joint local Plan is expected to include widespread publicity of the proposals to all sectors of the business and resident communities, a programme of briefings for groups of Town and Parish Councils, high levels of facilitation to engage in the consultation process through on line representations and interactive mapping functions allowing respondents to see specific proposals in better detail than printed. It is intended to hold the consultation over a period of time longer than 6 weeks and the consultation will begin in August 2017.

## **7. Equality Analysis**

- 7.1 The Plan will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment at the appropriate stage in the process.

## **8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications**

- 8.1 The preparation of a Local Plan jointly across both councils reflects the well-developed and continuing service integration and transformation process between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.
- 8.2 The Joint Local Plan is also being developed alongside work around a broader, strategic planning and infrastructure approach to cover all of Suffolk, known as the Suffolk Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Framework (SPIF). Although the 2 processes are separate, as the Joint Local Plan progresses, there will be an increasing need to develop a high degree of coordination between the two. This interaction and relationship (together with other collaborative planning activity with adjacent Local Planning Authorities) is being planned to meet the requirements of the Localism Act, national planning policy and recent and anticipated planning guidance. The current Local Development Scheme (LDS) takes into account the need to have regard to work on the SPIF and this will likely need to be considered further in late autumn this year and will be reported on at the appropriate time.

## **9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan**

- 9.1 The Joint Strategic Plan includes the following Priority Areas:
- Economy
  - Environment
  - Housing
  - Strong and Healthy Communities
- 9.2 The Joint Local Plan reflects these priorities by including them as objectives to be achieved (in part) through new land use and planning strategies. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document is attached as Appendix 1 to this report (known hereafter as the 'consultation document'). In particular, the Joint Local Plan will help the Council to achieve its key priorities on:

- Housing delivery – The consultation document identifies how many homes are needed in the area and sets out options for an appropriate spatial distribution of homes. It also identifies the size, type and tenure of homes needed for the area. The new Plan will provide certainty about growth expectations and locations, and retaining or improving the vitality of communities will be a key consideration. The consultation document contains options around providing flexibility to manage growth and ensure that development is delivered.
- Business growth and increased productivity – The consultation document identifies how much employment land is needed in the Districts and considers what might form an appropriate approach to ensure jobs growth can come forward. Options are set out in relation to allocating more land than required to provide flexibility.
- Assets and investments – The Joint Local Plan will enable the delivery of housing and employment growth in the area which will attract income generation for the Councils such as New Homes Bonus, Council Tax and Business Rates. It will also attract investment for new infrastructure delivery and enhancement.

## 10. Key Information

### Introduction

- 10.1 In June and July last year Members approved the commencement of the preparation of a new Joint Local Plan across both Districts, with a term lasting until 2036. Work has progressed well on a substantial updating of the Councils' evidence base in respect of needs and capacity, which now includes up to date evidence on Strategic Housing Market Assessment (from which Objectively Assessed Needs are derived), a Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (which identifies where sites are available within both districts for the delivery of housing, jobs and other requirements), Employment Needs Assessments (which consider land requirements in relation to employment growth) and a Town Centres and Retail study (which identifies retail capacity requirements).
- 10.2 Work is ongoing to complete evidence on heritage, leisure and infrastructure requirements, all of which will be completed prior to the drafting of the final version of the Plan.
- 10.3 The key milestones for the production of the Joint Local Plan (as adopted in March this year) are as follows:
- Draft Plan Consultation (Reg 18) Summer 2017
  - Proposed Plan Consultation (Reg 19) Winter 2017/18
  - Submission Summer 2018
  - Examination Winter 2018
  - Adoption Spring 2019

## Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan

- 10.4 The production of the new Joint Local Plan involves identifying the needs of the Districts together with the issues from meeting those needs. The consultation document presents the evidence and a series of options in relation to the quantum, distribution and delivery of growth, set out around topic areas. The document also includes consultation questions, along with an indication of the Councils' initial preference where appropriate.
- 10.5 After consultation, analysis of the responses together with considering the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal, viability testing, transport modelling and undertaking further updates to other evidence where necessary, will inform the drafting of the full version of the plan (the Regulation 19 version, sometimes known as the Submission Version). Assessment under the Habitats Directive, in terms of impacts upon internationally designated sites, will also be required.
- 10.6 The Joint Local Plan consists of 3 main sections, covering Strategic, Delivery and Places.
- 10.7 The Strategic section of the consultation document identifies key social, economic and environmental issues, provides a vision and identifies objectives in line with the objectives of the Councils' Joint Strategic Plan (Economy, Environment, Housing and Strong and Healthy Communities) and identifies those matters under which the Councils must cooperate with other bodies including adjacent Local Planning Authorities.
- 10.8 The Delivery section of the consultation document identifies a series of key issues and options for the growth of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts. These include:
- The housing requirement: As identified by the SHMA, the objectively assessed need (OAN) is 355 dwellings per annum for Babergh and 452 dwellings per annum for Mid Suffolk (over the period 2014-2036). Planning Practice Guidance requires Councils to consider an increase in the housing requirement where it could help to deliver the required number of affordable homes. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment concludes that the affordable housing needed appears achievable to deliver and that no adjustment to the housing figure is needed. This conclusion will need to be revisited throughout production of the plan and a Council decision will be required. The residual housing need to be 'found' through the Joint Local Plan is set out in the consultation document. Deliverability is identified as a key challenge and the document sets out proposals to implement a contingency or 'reserve site' approach;
  - Settlement hierarchy: A review of the settlement hierarchy, identifying settlements by key services and facilities. An indicative preferred settlement hierarchy is identified using a weighting approach for key facilities;
  - Distribution of growth: Options are set out in relation to the distribution of growth and these are: County town focused; Market town / rural area balance; Transport corridor focused and New settlement focused;

- Housing Mix and Affordable Housing: This section identifies the need for specific housing types and affordable housing, covering size, tenure, older persons' needs, specialist accommodation, starter homes, self and custom builds and affordable housing. Initial preferences, identifying a requirement for specific dwelling types and setting a requirement for affordable housing, are set out;
- Rural growth and development dealing with the approach to rural growth: This section identifies the difference in context and approach to growth in rural areas and considers the continuation of policy CS11 (of the Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031 – Core Strategy & Policies, 2014) or the use of specific allocations in towns and core villages alongside the revision of settlement boundaries in hinterland villages and hamlets;
- Gypsies and Travellers: Accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers are set out, being 1 permanent pitch in Babergh and either 9 or 30 (based on future availability of existing sites) permanent pitches in Mid Suffolk. Needs for transit sites and travelling showpeople's yards are also set out. An initial preference using a combination of allocations and criteria based policies is suggested to meet these requirements;
- Houseboats: Consideration of whether specific policies are required for houseboats;
- Economic needs: An approach to protecting existing employment areas is set out. Options are presented around allocating minimum levels of employment land or more land than is required to provide an element of flexibility. An approach to protecting existing employment areas is also set out;
- Town centres and retail: Capacity is identified for convenience and comparison floorspace requirements (of 2,548 sqm and 10,432 sqm for Babergh and 1,777 sqm and 3,152 sqm for Mid Suffolk respectively) based on the retail study carried out in 2015. The need to identify, update and protect town centres is also recognised through options either to restrict out of centre retail or to support the same in order to meet capacity requirements. The consultation plan also proposes amendments in relation to primary and secondary shopping frontages (and resultant changes in town centre boundaries), and associated thresholds for A1 retail uses, proposes thresholds for retail impact assessments, and includes consideration of protecting retail uses in core and hinterland villages;
- Biodiversity: The section recognises the wide diversity of habitats across both Districts, identifying whether to protect designated sites only or whether to protect and seek a collective inter authority approach to enhancement;
- Climate change: Accepting that global warming is increasing risk of flooding and coastal change, options for renewable energy and sustainable development are set out including around setting greater efficiency standards for energy and water use;

- Landscape and heritage: Options are presented around continuing to apply Special Landscape Areas, Visually Important Open Spaces and Areas of Visual and Recreational Amenity designations or applying a criteria based policy (to maintain the 16 character areas identified in the Councils' Landscape Guidance). In relation to heritage consideration is given to protection of non-designated heritage assets. In relation to design consideration is given to whether the Councils' own policies on design need reinforcing;
- Healthy communities: This section covers deprivation, green infrastructure, open spaces, sports and recreation by identifying options around prescriptive requirements for on-site provision (of open space) or relating requirements to identified needs. Options are also presented around considering contributions from non-residential uses and protecting existing open spaces, sports facilities and community facilities;
- Infrastructure: This section sets out an approach to identifying essential infrastructure (as defined in Infrastructure Delivery Plans) and the need for strategic infrastructure policies which relate growth to all infrastructure needs, including draft infrastructure policies for comment.

10.9 The final section of the consultation document deals with Place and covers the identification of functional clusters, the use of settlement boundaries and site allocations, the relationship of the Joint Local Plan to Neighbourhood Plans and identification of land for development through the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). The SHELAA sites (sites which are considered to be technically suitable, available and achievable) are appended to the consultation document and views on the sites will be sought as part of the consultation. Over 300 housing and employment sites are identified in 198 settlements, all of which have been updated to a new baseline of 31 March 2017. Not all of these sites will be required to meet development needs and the selection of allocations will be informed by consultation outcomes, evidence and appraisals.

10.10 Sustainability Appraisal of each of the options is being carried out and the Sustainability Appraisal report will be published alongside the consultation document.

## 11. Appendices

Title	Location
1) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan: Consultation Document (July 2017)	Enclosed

## 12. Background Documents

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Development Scheme (March 2017)

Authorship:  
 Bill Newman  
 Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning

01449 724891  
[Bill.Newman@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Bill.Newman@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)