

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Planning

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To: CABINET

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Public consultation on the draft Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies

Recommendations

That Cabinet

- (a) notes progress on the preparation of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1
- (b) supports the proposal for the Cabinet member for planning policy to finalise the details of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 document and supporting material for publication for public consultation and to agree the commencement of that consultation

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on progress of the preparation of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1, to look ahead to the upcoming consultation stage and to agree that the cabinet member for planning policy finalise the content of the document for the purposes of public consultation and to agree commencement of the consultation period.

Corporate Objectives

2. The Vale Local Plan 2029 'Part 1: Strategic sites and policies' (formerly the Core Strategy) will guide investment and development decisions across the Vale for a fifteen year period. Through the process of producing the document and in its implementation

it will be a major contributor to achieving three of the council's corporate objectives, namely meeting housing need, building the local economy and support for communities.

Background

3. Local planning authorities must prepare a local plan which sets planning policies in a local authority area. Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework').
4. Regulations¹ published alongside the Framework stipulate public consultation as part of the process of local plan preparation, both in its formative stages and when the local plan is submitted in final form to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The Framework² requires 'early and meaningful engagement and collaboration'. Public consultation is an important opportunity to receive opinions on and suggested improvements to the document. It also affords interested parties the opportunity to be heard on how they may be affected by the proposals and for these matters then to be duly considered in the preparation of the next stage of the document.
5. Following a review in 2011 and publication of the Framework the emerging core strategy has been progressed with a fresh approach, and re-titled the Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies. This will be followed by the Local Plan 2029 Part Two: Detailed policies and local sites, to be prepared 2014-2016.
6. The council is committed to bringing the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 to adoption as soon as practicably possible. This will enable needed development to take place and for supporting infrastructure to be delivered, and will provide the district with a five year supply of land for housing, as required by paragraph 47 of the Framework.

The consultation

7. It is proposed that a public consultation will commence on 28 February 2013 with publication of the draft Local Plan 2029 Part 1 document.
8. It is proposed that on 28 March 2013 we will publish further supporting documents as set out below, to help inform the consultation
 - the draft sustainability appraisal report
 - the draft infrastructure delivery plan
 - draft topic papers that explain how and why the policies in the draft plan were developed and the alternative policy options considered, and
 - technical evidence base studies that have informed policy development and are referenced in the draft local plan and topic papers.

¹ Regulations 18 and 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, issued 6 April 2012

² Framework paragraph 155

9. If the consultation period commences on 28 February then it will close at 4:00 pm on Thursday 9 May 2012, six weeks after 28 March and will provide in total ten weeks for people to review the draft plan and submit comments on it.
10. We shall carry out a number of actions to help promote awareness of this consultation opportunity. We shall
 - issue press releases (in addition to the formal notices in local papers)
 - issue an edition of 'Vale Community' (our new e-bulletin, created to help people keep up to date with news of progress on the local plan)
 - provide static exhibitions at key locations, eg town centres
 - go mobile with an exhibition road show, and
 - provide briefings for councillors and other stakeholder groups.

Local Plan Part 1 overview

11. In brief, the main development proposals we are consulting on in the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 are as follows.
12. The provision of 13,294 additional homes 2006/7 to 2028/29, or 578 homes per year, as required by the South East Plan. The alternative housing supply options we have considered will be published in a housing topic paper.
13. The allocation of the following strategic housing sites (which are in addition to those already identified in the current Local Plan, such as Grove Airfield) and details of the development they will accommodate and infrastructure and services that will be sought
 - Valley Park, west of Didcot (2,150 homes)
 - Crab Hill, north of Wantage and east of Grove (1,500 homes)
 - Monk's Farm, north of Grove (750 homes)
 - Land on the northern part of Harwell Oxford Campus (400 homes), and
 - Land on the south side of Park Road, Faringdon (350 homes).
14. Identification of up to 143 hectares of employment land available for development. The majority already lies within the district's premier business sites of Milton Park and Harwell Oxford Campus. Additional future employment land identified includes land at Didcot A, after the power station is decommissioned, and land south of Williams Formula 1 at Grove, as part of the Monks Farm strategic site.

Next steps

15. Consultation is an integral part of the process of preparing the local plan and testing emerging policies. The evidence base is still being developed, and both updated evidence and the results of public consultation will help inform the completion of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1.

16. The published Local Development Scheme sets out our intention to consult on the emerging draft local plan from the end of February 2013, prior to finalising the local plan for further pre-submission consultation later in 2013 and then for adoption by October 2014.

Options

17. Production of a local plan and consultation upon it is a statutory requirement and there are no reasonable alternative options to be considered.

Financial Implications

18. The council has set aside funding to cover the costs of preparing the Local Plan 2029 and consultation on it at key stages. The costs associated with this particular consultation stage can be accommodated within the budget for this financial year and therefore there are no financial implications arising from this decision.

Legal Implications

19. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that local planning authorities produce a local development plan for their area. Publication of the local plan in draft form for consultation meets the requirement in regulations and guidance³ to meaningfully consult those likely to be affected.

Risks

20. Failure to consult at appropriate stages would present a significant risk to the likelihood of the Local Plan later being found sound and capable of adoption. No risks arise from the recommended decision.

Other implications

21. None.

Conclusion

(c) Cabinet is recommended to note progress on the preparation of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 and support the proposal for the Cabinet member for planning policy to finalise the details of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 document and supporting material for publication for public consultation and to agree the commencement of that consultation.

³ The Framework and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, 6 April 2012