

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Planning

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To: CABINET

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South Oxfordshire Local Plan

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- (a) approves the Local Development Scheme, attached at Appendix 1;
- (b) endorses the work programme set out to progress the Local Plan and bring a Publication version of the Local Plan to Council as set out in the timetable.

Purpose of report

1. To update councillors of the latest position regarding the emerging Local Plan for South Oxfordshire.
2. To approve the Local Development Scheme and endorse the work programme.

Strategic Objectives

3. The delivery of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan will contribute towards four of the Council's six strategic objectives.
4. The Local Plan has a key role to play in delivering the district's future as it sets out the level and distribution of development to 2033, which will help to shape the future of South Oxfordshire.

5. The potential of Didcot, is a strategic objective, which is supported by the retention of the existing allocations of land at Didcot for residential and employment related development. To further support this, additional allocations for residential development have been proposed which reflect extant planning permissions.
6. A key role of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan is to identify sufficient employment and housing land for existing and future communities. This directly supports the strategic objective to deliver 'homes and jobs for everyone.'
7. The emerging Local Plan supports the strategic objective to 'build thriving communities'. In addition to the provision for different land uses, the policies within the plan will ensure that developers provide the necessary infrastructure to support the new communities.

Background

8. This report follows earlier reports to Cabinet and Council in April/May 2018.
9. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan is the key document in the Development Plan for the district between 2011-2033 and, on its adoption, will replace the existing adopted Core Strategy and adopted Local Plan.
10. All local authorities are under a statutory obligation to prepare a local plan. We have previously consulted at the following stages;

Issues and Scope – June 2014

Refined Options – February 2015

Preferred Options – June 2016

Second Preferred Options – March 2017

Publication – October 2017

11. Following the close of the Publication period, the Council was advised that the landowners, Homes England, of one our strategic sites had been unable to reach agreement with their tenants, Martin Baker, to secure the land for housing. The site, Chalgrove Airfield, had been included in the draft Local Plan as a strategic allocation (3,000 homes).
12. Given the position with the Chalgrove site, Council needed to review how best to proceed with the Local Plan. The progress of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan was considered at a meeting of Council on 15 May 2018, where Council resolved;
 - a) subject to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirming that submission of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan in January 2020 would not significantly impact on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal or the freedoms and flexibilities proposed as part of it, to ask officers to reassess all sites capable of forming a strategic allocation promoted through the Local Plan (to 2033) process up to the end of the Regulation 19 publication period (including all strategic sites proposed in the October 2017 Regulation 19 document) and to bring a draft Regulation 18/Regulation 19 document (as required) to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for publication for consultation; and

b) in the event that such confirmation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is not forthcoming to the satisfaction of the Head of Partnership and Insight and the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Leader of the council and the Cabinet members for planning and partnership and insight by no later than completion of the site filtering exercise (expected July 2018), to adopt Option 3, set out in the report of the Head of Planning to Cabinet on 10 May 2018, and to ask officers to bring the Regulation 19 (October 2017) document including proposed additional reserve site(s) to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for publication for consultation.

13. Officers wrote an initial letter to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 24 May, which is published on our website, and have maintained a dialogue with them over the last few weeks regarding the review process.
14. The site review work has provided an opportunity to review the possibility of an alternative(s) to Chalgrove airfield as well as undertake a review of all of the proposed Local Plan sites in the last version of the Plan from October 2017. This has ensured consistency and justification for the allocations, which the Plan ultimately promotes.
15. Officers are grateful to the support extended from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) about the methodology and process of undergoing a site assessment process at this stage of the Local Plan development. Also in June 2018 the Planning Inspectorate provided a visit and meeting to SODC, where the methodology proposed was discussed and revised.
16. The process and principles employed has generated 15 sites which were then subject to a general appraisal. This work has now been completed and we have updated councillors in more detail on the outcomes of that general appraisal. This general appraisal has filtered sites to be taken forward to a more detailed appraisal and analysis. These are the sites which will now be subject to the evidence base updates needed to support any potential allocation in the Local Plan. Notwithstanding this, all sites will continue to be potential sites until a decision is made by Council.
17. In light of the progress made and the officer filtering of sites, we expect to be able to submit the Local Plan within the timescales set out in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Officers have reviewed the timetable and drawn up a more detailed week based project plan, which reflects the current position before a final decision is made by Council. This timetable provides a route forward to submission to meet the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal milestones. The time required to complete the evidence base has been reviewed, as much of this work is reliant on external consultants and their ability to match our timescales. It does not include the potential for consultation on main modifications to the Local Plan (part of Examination process). If this is required, then the Local Plan could be adopted in January 2020.

April - May 2018	Information review of alternative sites
April – May 2018	Housing and employment land availability assessment update.
April 2018	Objectives Development
May - June 2018	Site Filtering exercise
June 2018	Round Table Session open to all district councillors – information review of alternative sites

April – Aug 2018	Evidence Base updates
Sept – Oct 2018	Draft Local Plan
October 2018	Round Table Session open to all district councillors – outcomes of site filtering and evidence
December 2018	Scrutiny/Cabinet/Council
Jan-Feb 2019	Publication of the Local Plan (Regulation 19)
March 2019	Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)
March-Sept 2019*	Examination in Public (Regulation 24)
September 2019*	Inspector's report (Regulation 25)
November 2019*	Adoption (Regulation 26)

* timetable advised by the Planning Inspectorate

18. A revised Local Development Scheme for the South Oxfordshire Local Plan is set out at Appendix 1.
19. The implication of this would be that the Local Plan would be submitted beyond the proposed transitional arrangements for the NPPF but before the 31 March 2019, Housing and Growth Deal deadline.
20. The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published 24 July. Officers are assessing the impact on the work and will provide a verbal update at the meeting. This will include any impact upon the anticipated timetable, and whether we may need to discuss any impact on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
21. Officers remain in positive and regular communication with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Councillors will continue to be updated on the progress of the Local Plan through the Round Table Sessions for all district councillors. Officers continue to liaise closely with our partner authorities across Oxfordshire regarding the Housing and Growth Deal linked aspects of this matter.

Financial Implications

22. The preparation of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan is undertaken by officers within the Planning Policy team and is supported by an extensive evidence base. The activities of this team are met from the existing Planning Policy budget. Many of the documents which support the Local Plan will require to be updated. Much of the technical supporting evidence base has been prepared by external consultants and the additional work required will vary across the evidence base. However, officers believe updates can be covered from within the existing policy budgets.

Legal Implications

23. Local authorities are required by law to prepare a development plan for their administrative area and the process for doing that is governed by statute. The Local Development Scheme demonstrates how the council is progressing it's Local Plan to adoption.

Risks

24. A failure to progress a Local Plan that identifies future development requirements for the area and strategic locations where these requirements can be accommodated will result in a policy vacuum, increasing the risk of ad hoc development proposals being submitted and potentially, to decisions being secured by appeal.
25. The absence of a Local Plan could result in an uncoordinated approach to development, leading to inappropriate and incremental development being allowed on appeal that does not take account of cumulative implications and requirements for supporting infrastructure, with the potential for adverse environmental impacts.

Other Implications

26. The implication of the revised timetable is that the Local Plan would be submitted beyond the proposed transitional arrangements for the NPPF, but before the Housing and Growth Deal local plan submission deadline.

Conclusion

27. Cabinet is asked to consider the attached updated timetable for the Local Plan (Local Development Scheme) and approve this and endorse the work programme moving forward.

Background Papers

None