

# **Management Committee**

## **10 July 2018**

### **West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review: 'Preferred Options' document for public consultation**

#### **For Recommendation**

##### **Brief Holder**

Cllr Ray Nowak, Environment and Sustainability

##### **Senior Leadership Team Contact:**

S Hill, Strategic Director

##### **Report Author:**

Hilary Jordan, Corporate Manager, Planning (Community & Policy Development)

##### **Statutory Authority**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 provide the statutory basis for the preparation and review of local plans.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 provide the statutory basis for undertaking the sustainability appraisal of plans.

##### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To take forward the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review 'Preferred Options' document to public consultation. Making progress on the review of the local plan is vital to ensuring that we meet our statutory responsibilities to maintain and review the development plan for the area.

##### **Recommendations**

- 2 (a) That the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review: Preferred Options document be approved for the purpose of public consultation;  
(b) That delegated authority be given to the Corporate Manager, Planning (Community & Policy Development), in consultation with the Brief Holder, to make any further minor textual changes as necessary prior to the consultation start date.

##### **Reason for Decision**

- 3 To enable further public consultation to take place, and to progress the review of the local plan in order to meet our statutory responsibilities for

local plan preparation and ensure that we are providing sufficient land for future development.

## **Background and Reason Decision Needed**

- 4 The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan was adopted in October 2015. The inspector's report, following the public examination of the plan, identified that it was imperative that an early review was undertaken in order to identify additional land capable of meeting housing needs to the end of the current plan period and for the five years afterwards. This intention is clearly stated within the adopted local plan (Policy SUS1 and paragraph 11.2.3).
- 5 Notwithstanding this specific commitment, there are other reasons why it is important to progress the review of the local plan. The councils currently do not have the required five-year supply of land for housing, and as a result cannot give full weight to the relevant policies of the adopted local plan in decisions on applications. This means that in many cases we have to grant permission for development even if it is contrary to the local plan policies, for example if it is outside a defined development boundary (DDB). When we have a five-year housing land supply then we are able to give greater weight to local policy in decisions. The review is an opportunity not only to roll forward provision until 2036, but to increase the level of supply and choice of sites, so as to reduce the risk of being without a five-year supply in future.
- 6 The revisions currently being made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also include a requirement that local plans are reviewed every five years. Once a plan is more than five years old, it will be regarded as out of date and its housing targets will no longer be used as the basis for assessing the five-year land supply: the figures resulting from the new national methodology for calculating housing supply will be used instead. It is therefore important to progress the review of the local plan so as to maintain and increase the level of local control over decisions about future development.
- 7 The first stage of consultation on the local plan review took place in 2017. This was an open consultation on a wide range of issues and options: the responses have all been published online and have been considered in drafting this second 'preferred options' document, which narrows down the range of options to those considered most appropriate for inclusion in the final plan. This is still an informal stage of consultation, so that the council will have the opportunity to make changes before preparing the formal submission document. That version of the plan will be subject to a final consultation before being submitted for its independent examination: the inspector will consider the responses made at that stage as part of the examination process.
- 8 The draft 'preferred options' main consultation document (Appendix 1 of this report) identifies a significant number of new sites for housing and employment development. In particular, it reflects the previous inspector's recommendation that the review should focus particularly on meeting future needs in Dorchester and Sherborne, where few additional land

allocations were made in the last plan. Major new development proposals are therefore put forward for land north of Dorchester, and land west of Sherborne. Both are subject to significant infrastructure requirements and environmental mitigation, details of which are set out in the draft preferred options. The North Dorchester development proposal includes a new east-west road link through the site; new first, middle and higher level schools; new healthcare provision; biodiversity enhancement and recreational access around the watermeadows; and pedestrian and cycle access into the town. The Sherborne development proposal includes a new link road between the A30 and B3148 Marston Road; other junction improvements; pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre; and the expansion of the Sherborne Abbey Primary School. Further masterplanning work is proposed for both developments to ensure a comprehensive approach, appropriate phasing and the required infrastructure provision.

- 9 The preferred options also include additional sites at Weymouth, Chickerell, Crossways, Beaminster and Lyme Regis and detailed proposals for the amendment and updating of the general policy framework of the plan. Changes have been put forward in response to the emerging revised NPPF (including a housing target based on the new standard national methodology, which raises the annual housing target from 775 per annum to 794 per annum across the plan area), and to address matters that had not been fully resolved in the previous plan, including the definition of the green infrastructure network and identification of 'coastal change management areas.' The aim has been to present as much detail as possible at this stage so that once the consultation has taken place and the results have been considered, we will be ready to progress to a full draft plan without significant further work.
- 10 Appendices 2 to 5 include further material, which will also form part of the preferred options consultation document. Appendix 2 is a glossary of terms, which has been updated and includes a number of new definitions from the draft revised NPPF, such as the changed definition of affordable housing. Appendix 3 includes a list of strategic policies, which neighbourhood plans need to be in general conformity with. The preferred options document takes forward the existing allocations from the current local plan and also identifies a number of new 'preferred options' for additional growth. The boundaries of these new 'preferred option' sites are identified on maps in Appendix 4. They are also clearly identified in the text and policies of the main consultation document. A recent town centre study has made recommendations for the definition of town, district and local centre boundaries, primary shopping areas and primary and secondary shopping frontages. These designations, together with sites for potential town centre expansion, are shown on maps in Appendix 5.
- 11 This report has already been considered by Policy Development Committee (on 18 June 2018) and West Dorset District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (on 12 June 2018). The agendas / minutes of those meetings are / will be made available on the 'modgov' website - see <https://moderngovdcp.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>. A 'schedule of changes' has been produced (as Appendix 6), setting out a number of amendments to the Preferred Options document. A number of changes were recommended by the Policy Development Committee including the deletion of the proposed site south of Wey Valley (Policy

WEY15). A number of indicative layout diagram and other maps have now been prepared for inclusion in the Preferred Options document, which are listed in the schedule and shown on maps in a series of annexes. A number of other amendments to add clarity and achieve consistency are also detailed in the schedule.

- 12 Public consultation is proposed to take place for eight weeks from August to October and the results will shape the final draft plan that will be submitted for public examination.

## **Implications**

### **Corporate Plan**

- 13 The local plan review will contribute to achieving the corporate aims relating to the economy and quality of life, including helping to stimulate economic growth to offer better jobs and prospects for local people; increasing the number of new homes built; enhancing people's quality of life; and safeguarding and providing opportunities to enjoy the natural and built environment now and in the future.

### **Financial**

- 14 The preparation of the local plan is being funded from existing budgets, including additional funding from reserves that has been identified to fund the evidence base work and the cost of the public examination process.

### **Equalities**

- 15 The draft local plan policies will be subject to an equalities impact assessment and amendments made if necessary to ensure that there are no particular adverse impacts on those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Environmental**

- 16 The 'preferred options' is subject to a sustainability appraisal which has considered their economic, social and environmental implications. The sustainability appraisal will be consulted upon alongside the Local Plan Review in accordance with statutory requirements. Due to the nature of the plan development process, the Sustainability Appraisal is currently a 'working draft', but is available as a background document prior to the Management Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July. The final draft of the sustainability appraisal will be available as a background document at the time of the meeting. When submitted, the local plan review will also require a habitats regulations assessment, which will consider the potential impact of proposals on internationally important wildlife sites.
- 17 Evidence on the potential environmental impacts of the development options has been commissioned from specialist consultants where necessary in order to provide an independent assessment of environmental effects. This has for example included a new landscape and historic environment assessment for the area.

## **Economic Development**

- 18 The 'preferred options' for the local plan review carry forward the original vision including the aim of facilitating inward investment to create better jobs, consistent with the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy. Additional employment land is being allocated through the local plan review in order to assist in meeting this aim.

## **Risk Management (including Health & Safety)**

- 19 Progress on the review of the local plan is important because it will allocate further land for development, helping to improve the council's chances of having the required five-year supply of land for housing in future.
- 20 When we do not have a five-year land supply, less weight can be given to relevant local plan policies in decision making on planning applications. Once the adopted local plan is more than five years old then the whole plan will be regarded as out of date and will carry less weight. The draft revised National Planning Policy Framework introduces a requirement for plans to be reviewed every five years, and also introduces a 'delivery test' under which policies will be regarded as out of date not only where there is no five-year land supply, but also where housing delivery is not meeting targets.
- 21 Making progress on the review, and allocating sufficient land for housing development in the plan, will help to reduce the risk of being unable to give sufficient weight to our policies in decisions.
- 22 Decisions will need to be made about how local plan reviews are continued once the new unitary authority for Dorset is in place next year, but whether this review continues in its current form, or becomes part of a unitary council-wide plan at a later stage, progressing this stage now will enable us to continue working on the vital decisions to be made about future locations of development, in consultation with the local community, reducing the risk of being without a plan and unable to give weight to our policies in decisions .

## **Human Resources**

- 23 Work on the local plan review is being undertaken by the Spatial Policy and Implementation team, with advice also being taken from officers in a number of other teams, particularly Development Management. Consultants have also been employed to provide specialist input such as the landscape and heritage study, and retail need assessment.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 24 The local plan review process includes consultation and engagement at a number of stages. Consultation on 'issues and options' took place in 2017 and the results have been taken into account in formulating the 'preferred options'. The 'preferred options' document will be published for public consultation in mid August, with a consultation period lasting for eight

weeks and concluding in October. A series of public exhibitions will be held as part of the consultation exercise. All consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Councils' Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review: Preferred Options: Main Consultation Document (draft)

Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms

Appendix 3 – List of Strategic Policies

Appendix 4 – Maps of New 'Preferred Options' Sites

Appendix 5 – Maps of Proposed Town Centre Designations

Appendix 6 – Schedule of Changes

## **Background Papers**

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review: Sustainability Appraisal (working draft)

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan Review: Summary of responses to 'Issues and Options' consultation, available at <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/article/421784>

## **Footnote**

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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