

Local Plan Update

Summary: This report updates Members on the progress made in finalising the Proposed Submission version of the emerging Local Plan ahead of Regulation 19 consultation

Recommendations: **That Members note the progress made.**

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
Cllr J Toye portfolio holder for Planning	All Wards
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The emerging North Norfolk Local Plan has been subject to public consultation at regulation 18 stage during May and June 2019. Between March 2020 and April 2021 a number of specific policy reports have been brought for discussion to this Working Party in order to finalise the strategic policies and the approach to be taken in the Proposed Submission Version of the emerging Local Plan ahead of the statutory Regulation 19 consultation and subsequent submission for independent examination.
- 1.2 **The purpose** of this report, is to provide Members with an update on the work subsequently undertaken around the final structure of the Plan and the consolidation of policies and approaches to create a comprehensive planning framework for North Norfolk.

2. Structure of the Plan

- 2.1 The structure of the emerging Plan has been aligned to better reflect the changes in the Corporate Plan, the shift towards environmental priorities as identified in the Council's Environmental Charter, the general direction of feedback received, and Member endorsements of approaches discussed during the last year. Reflecting these, national policy and the drive to low carbon development the opportunity has been taken to reorganise the content of the Plan so that a greater emphasis is now put on climate change considerations. Drawing all of the climate change policies together into a single new section at the front of the Plan now presents a more coherent and comprehensive approach to this issue. As such the Plan builds on the fundamental principle contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF, that strategic plans include proactive planning measures to address climate change through resilience, mitigation and adaptation and which support the transition to a low carbon economy.

- 2.2 The revised structure and how this corresponds with the previous version is attached as **Appendix 1** for information
- 2.3 The Spatial Portrait and key challenges section of the Plan have been updated with additional local context on greenhouse emissions per sector across North Norfolk and supporting explanatory text that highlights the potential consequences and key challenges that climate change brings. The key message that action on climate change is required is not only embedded in the Local Plan but is now at the forefront for everyone to see.
- 2.4 As stated above, a new Climate Change section has been created in the Plan updating what was previously called the 'Sustainable Development' section at Regulation 18. A new overarching policy setting out the principles of delivering Climate Resilient Sustainable Growth updates the previous Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, SD1 policy, and sets out how the presumption should be applied locally across North Norfolk adding in the climate change principles and considerations. Climate related policies from across the Reg 18 Plan have then been consolidated into this section. Collectively, the policies in this section seek to guide development to achieve sustainable solutions and taken as a whole with the remaining policies of the Development Plan, will constitute the Council's view on what sustainable development means in practice for the District in relation to the Planning System. The approach is now presented as a more holistic strategy and not limited to one single strategy or policy. When taken as a whole the approach demonstrates the Council's ambition to seek to shape the economic, environmental and social landscape for the better by ensuring such matters are considered as part of the planning process.
- 2.5 The Local Plan seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote low carbon development in many ways. Promoting sustainable growth locations, high standards of design of new development and progressive (step change) construction standards are prominent considerations. The Plan sets out that the majority of development will be located in higher order and principle settlements, helping to support service provision, reduce the need to travel and creating mixed inclusive communities. Development that promotes alternative modes of transport, provides adequate infrastructure for step change to low carbon transport & heating and incorporates open space, on site recreation and multi-functioning open space provision that maximises opportunities to enhance the green infrastructure network across the District is encouraged. The use of permeable material, water efficient design that maximises the opportunities for the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and takes into account the multi-functional benefits of compatible land uses and materials are policy requirements. The location of development will also facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport, and in rural settlements contribute making communities more sustainable. Coastal policies seek to manage and mitigate the effects of coastal erosion. Environmental policies seek local distinctiveness, the conservation and enhancement of our natural and historic environment and landscape character of the District and seek to support new habitat and biodiversity net gain enhancements.
- 2.6 The flow chart previously requested outlining this figuratively has been developed and will also be included in the final version and will illustrate the above in a holistic way.

- 2.7 Reflecting the emerging Environment Bill a new policy is included around Biodiversity net gain. Biodiversity net gain in planning is development that leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than before and is a mandatory consideration for all development through the emerging Environment Bill.
- 2.8 Whilst the mandatory targets have yet to come into force, the policy direction is clear, that all future development delivers at least a 10% calculated biodiversity net gain that will be secured for a period of 30 years. It remains reasonable and sensible that given the Council's declaration of climate change emergency that the Local Plan includes a policy approach at this stage to stipulate and quantify biodiversity net gain as a condition of granting planning permission. The approach also supports the long-term adaptability and resilience to climate change across the District and is aligned with the Environment Charter.
- 2.9 The inclusion of the policy now not only helps to future proof the emerging Local Plan in this area it also allows the Environment Charter to include an action of delivering biodiversity net gain across the District in a measurable way as well as the planned planting of 110,000 trees by the Council.
- 2.10 Members asked that the Coastal section was finalised with further discussions with the Coastal Team manager and an additional clarification has been added to the Coastal Erosion policy that brings it into alignment with the approaches emerging through the joint LPA Coastal SPD. The amendment clarifies that a supporting Coastal Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for new development or the intensification of existing development is now required for proposals that are within 30m of the landward edge of hold the line areas, but outside the Coastal change management area.
- 2.11 Following on from the Climate Change considerations and section a separate Spatial Strategy and Delivering Well Connected, Healthy Communities sections have been created.
- 2.12 The Spatial Strategy section brings together the three policies that provide a framework to deliver development that is necessary to meet the area's future needs. The approach reflects on the function of and relationship between settlements, growth requirements and opportunities to contribute to climate resilient sustainable growth as previously agreed. SS1, (formally SD3) sets out the distribution of development including the approach to growth in small Growth Villages. Additional clarity has been added to the policy criteria and supporting text to this policy in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder and Housing colleagues in order to aid interpretation and ensure affordable housing is considered first and seen as a substantial community benefit to any proposal brought forward in the Small Growth Villages. Policy SS2 sets out the approach to development in the countryside while Policy SS3 makes clear the Councils support for various types of development which are led by, and have support of the community. (Formally SD2). Additional clarity has been included under delegated.
- 2.13 The new Delivering Well Connected, Healthy Communities section ensures greater transparency and reflects Members wishes to elevate the requirements of these considerations in the planning process to ensure they are an integral part of planning proposals at the start. The policies in this

section of the Plan are designed to ensure that local communities and supporting infrastructure are at the centre of decision-making in order to meet a number of the Strategic Aims and Objectives and align with Government aims. These include the protection and enhancement of community facilities, existing infrastructure, services, and public transport, as well as, the promotion of broadband connectivity and that proposals include infrastructure improvements and where appropriate consider health. The protection, enhancement and provision of a range of formal and informal open spaces set out in Policy HC2 Open space and local green spaces will achieve important health and well-being benefits that complements multiple policies within the Plan.

- 2.14 The Environment section collectively ensures that appropriate consideration is given to important landscape of the District and those of the wider built environment. Minor amendments, around the consistency of wording, and structure have been undertaken to ensure alignment with the wider policy approaches and ensure the policies include operable and measurable criteria.
- 2.15 The Housing and Economy sections comprise of the remaining policies. The housing section policies complement the housing distribution policies (SS1-SS3) and are consistent with government policies to ensure that sufficient homes, of the right types, are built in the right places to address all of the housing needs identified by local evidence. Housing numbers included in Policy HOU1, Delivering Sufficient Homes and the supporting text have been updated to reflect the monitoring year end of 31.3.2021, the emerging site allocations and reflect the approach taken around the standard methodology and ONS projections. The Economy section is largely unchanged in structure and presentation and delivers policies around the quantity of employment land and the appropriate use on designated and non-designated employment areas as well as setting the retail hierarchy for the sequential approach considerations and wider policies covering tourism.
- 2.16 Throughout the document the reasoned justifications sections, the text that comes before each policy has been revised and refined, removing duplication and contextual text that was included at the previous stage to help inform debate and the Regulation 18 responses. Refinements focus on emphasising the purpose of the policy and help provide meaning around and the intent of the approach in order to guide applications and decision makers in the interpretation of the policy.
- 2.17 Across the Plan policy wording has been reviewed in detail to ensure they include the matters requested and to ensure they are clear and unambiguous. Work has also now started on the monitoring framework required which is required to identify a set of indicators in order to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan in line with its operable clauses and help inform the Annual Monitoring Report and measurable corporate priorities set.

3. Next stages

- 3.1 This work is interrelated and iterative to the progression of various other documents and is reflected in the finalisation of the Sustainability Appraisal, the final HRA and Consultation Statement. A Monitoring Framework, policies mapping and appropriate GIS layers are also being developed from this version. The Consultation Statement which is a required statutory document, sets out more specifically how the feedback at Regulation 18 has been

considered and informed the preparation of the Proposed Submission version. All these work streams are currently advancing.

- 3.2 In addition updated viability evidence is being prepared and work undertaken to finalise the remaining site allocations site work is continuing. Where necessary this work will be brought to future Working Parties.
- 3.3 At this stage further work is ongoing and a further version is still required, peer review and consistency are expected to result in minor alterations only at this stage. The next stages will be to produce the Plan in a more publishable format and complete the supporting documents before seeking endorsement for consultation.

4 Recommendations

That Members note the progress made

5 Legal Implications and Risks

- 5.1 The Council must produce a Local Plan which complies with various regulatory and legal requirements and in determining its policy approaches must be justified and underpinned by up to date and proportionate evidence, the application of a consistent methodology and take account of public feedback and national policy and guidance.
- 5.2 The statutory process requires records of consultation feedback and a demonstration of how this has informed plan making with further commentary demonstrating how the representation at regulation 18 have been taken into account in line with Regulation 22.

6 Financial Implications and Risks

- 6.1 Failure to undertake plan preparation in accordance with the regulations and NPPF is likely to render the plan 'unsound' at examination and result in the need to return to earlier stages. Substantial additional costs would be incurred.

Appendix 1

Local Plan Structure