

**Blaby District Council  
Council**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>19 January 2021</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>New Local Plan Options Consultation</b> This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr. Ben Taylor - Planning, Housing Strategy, Economic Development</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Planning & Economic Development Group Manager
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	All Priorities: A Place to Live; A Place to Work; A Place to Visit; People Strategy; Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

**1. What is this report about?**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to commence public consultation on the Blaby District Council New Local Plan Options document.

**2. Recommendation(s) to Council**

- 2.1 That Council approves the commencement of public consultation on the Blaby District Council New Local Plan Options document, attached at Appendix A (to follow).

**3. Reason for Decisions Recommended**

- 3.1 Local Planning Authorities are required, via legislation, to consult at key stages of preparing a new Local Plan.

**4. Matters to consider**

4.1 Background

A new Local Plan is currently being prepared for the District. The current Local Plan comprises:

1. The Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document ('Core Strategy') (adopted February 2013), and
2. The Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document ('Delivery DPD') (adopted February 2019)

The Core Strategy, which sets out the strategy for growth and the amount of development required, was adopted nearly 8 years ago. There have been multiple changes to the planning landscape since this time, including: revised housing and employment land requirements; updated Government Guidance; and agreement to the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. It is therefore now necessary to review and refresh the Local Plan to take account of the longer term need for growth.

The emerging Local Plan will supersede the Core Strategy and Delivery DPD, resulting in a single document that sets out the blueprint for development over the next 15 years.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the Council's programme for the production of the Local Plan. A new LDS was adopted in December 2020, which sets out the intention to undertake a Regulation 18 (informal) public consultation on emerging options for the new Local Plan, to commence in January 2021.

This consultation will form part of a wider planned programme of public consultation, to take place throughout the period of the new Local Plan preparation. A consultation has already taken place on the Issues and Options document, back in Summer 2019. This consultation asked for views on whether or not we had identified the correct issues facing the District. We also wanted to know whether any of the potential policy options are the most appropriate for addressing the identified issues. A summary of the responses received to this consultation is attached at Appendix B.

A further, more formal (Regulation 19), consultation is also planned for early 2022; when we have a full draft new Local Plan. This will include detailed draft policies and preferred site options amongst other things.

In order to progress the new Local Plan, Officers have been gathering evidence, engaging with partners and stakeholders, and starting to draft high level policies. This has culminated in the New Local Plan Options document, attached at Appendix A. This document will form the basis of the proposed public consultation; along with a number of supporting technical reports and other documents. These are referred to at 10.1 below. It has not been possible to attach all of the relevant documents to this report, due to the number and size of them, and therefore a web link is provided for access to additional documentation.

The Blaby District Council New Local Plan Options document (Appendix A) sets out what we are planning to consult on. In summary we will be seeking views on three key areas:

- Options for the spatial strategy and location of future development - setting out the direction that the Council expects to take.

- Reasonable site options – these are sites promoted to the Council for built development by landowners, developers and site promoters
- Initial information about other strategic policies we expect to include in the Local Plan

There is a substantial amount of additional work, evidence, and engagement with stakeholders needed before the Local Plan is finalised and submitted to the Secretary of State in a form that is likely to be found 'sound'. This work will continue throughout 2021, and the responses to this proposed consultation will form an important part of this process.

### Public Consultation

The consultation is anticipated to start on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January, will be carried out in line with our Statement of Community Involvement, and will last for 6 weeks. This will enable time, should the consultation be approved, for officers to incorporate any suggested changes, have any further documents added to the website, and importantly allow for sufficient lead-in time to post out any paper consultation letters.

The following consultation methods will be used:

- Consultation letters – via both email and post
- Use of the planning newsletter
- Social media
- Website
- Production of a non-technical summary of the consultation document

Officers are also considering whether it will be possible to hold virtual (digital) workshops.

Legislation, which has been put in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, enables the Council to consult using digital methods; and without having to hold physical events or make paper copies of documents available. It is unfortunate that this will inevitably disadvantage some residents who are unable to access digital technology; and careful consideration has been given to this.

It is however considered important that the Council continues with the consultation within the proposed timetable; as it is not known how long the pandemic will last for, and the Local Plan timetable cannot be delayed without consequences for the District – such as future unwanted and unplanned development.

Officers will make documents available on request, for those who need them, and will consider other traditional methods of engagement should they be needed; such as phone calls and letters.

#### 4.2 Proposal(s)

That a Regulation 18 public consultation on the emerging new Local Plan options be undertaken. The Blaby District Council New Local Plan Options document, attached at Appendix A (to follow), would be used as the basis for this consultation; along with a number of other technical reports and papers listed at 10.1 below.

#### 4.3 Relevant Consultations

Internal consultations have been undertaken as appropriate. Details of the public consultation are set out at 4.1 above.

#### 4.4 Significant Issues

##### Legal Implications

The Council has to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), which requires local planning authorities to undertake public consultations at various stages of preparing a new Local Plan.

##### Human Resource Implications

There are no human resources implications. There is currently one vacant post within the Development Strategy Team, however recruitment for this is due to start very soon.

### **5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?**

- 5.1 The costs for Local Plan preparation, including staffing, are already allowed for in the budget for 2020/21, and the proposed budget for 2021/22. Budgeting beyond this will consider and take account of the need for any further expenses to be incurred in relation to preparing the new Local Plan.

Opportunities to save money will be considered throughout the preparation of the new Local Plan, including pursuing joint working with neighbouring authorities on suitable evidence base work, where possible.

### **6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?**

- 6.1 The main risks in preparing the new Local Plan are as follows:

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Staff turnover / loss / long term absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide appropriate training to encourage staff retention.</li><li>• Provide a varied workload to keep staff engaged and motivated.</li><li>• Recruitment to commence as soon as the current post holder submits</li></ul>

	<p>their notice (subject to available funding).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ agency staff/ consultants to cover periods of absence (subject to available funding).</li> <li>• Re-deploy suitable staff from the Development Services Team should opportunities arise.</li> </ul>
Competing work priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise importance of Local Plan. Monitor progress and give priority to milestones in the Local Development Scheme. Bring in additional resources if needed.</li> </ul>
Significant changes to Government policy as Local Plan is prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor Government statements to pre-empt legislation and policy changes.</li> <li>• Take a flexible policy approach where appropriate.</li> </ul>
Evidence gathering delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Plan relies on substantial evidence on a range of issues.</li> <li>• Provide resources and funding to complete evidence gathering.</li> <li>• Encourage early engagement to secure evidence.</li> </ul>
Changes in Housing, Employment & other development requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor changes to proposed Standard method</li> <li>• Build in flexibility into Local Plan options for growth.</li> <li>• Early completions of the Statement of Common Ground with other HMA partners.</li> </ul>
Substantial evidence requirements arising from Strategic Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification of key issues in relation to Strategic Sites and engagement with key partners (including infrastructure providers and site promoters).</li> </ul>
Cross boundary strategic issues in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers will continue to remain engaged in discussions with colleagues from across the authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire to understand any implications there may be for Blaby District, and take action as appropriate in a timely manner. The new Local Plan will take account of and plan for any emerging cross boundary strategic issues in Leicester and Leicestershire.</li> </ul>

Examination Process – Soundness of DPDs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with MHCLG and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).</li> <li>• Follow procedures set out in the Planning Acts, Regulations, NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance.</li> </ul>
Duty to Co-operate failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with local authorities within the Housing Market Area and other partners on strategic, cross boundary matters and prepare Statements of Common Ground, as appropriate.</li> </ul>

## 7. Other options considered

7.1 The alternative option is to not undertake public consultation at this time. However, following careful consideration, your officers feel that this option is not preferable for the following reasons:

- Failure to engage with our communities runs the risk of reputational damage; and means that residents would not have the ability to influence the new Local Plan as it emerges.
- Failure to consult at this time would mean that the timetable for the new Local Plan would be delayed.

## 8. Environmental impact

8.1 The Local Plan sets out the blueprint for growth and development in the District of Blaby over the next 15 years. This will have considerable environmental impacts, which legislation requires us to consider. As the new Local Plan progresses, a series of technical assessments – required by law – will be undertaken at various key stages. In addition, such impacts are formally assessed as part of the Local Plan Examination prior to adoption.

## 9. Other significant issues

9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Public Health Inequalities and Climate Local and no direct areas of concern have been identified. The author has also considered issues related to Equality and Human Rights along with the Performance and Systems Manager.

An Equality Impact & Needs Assessment has been prepared.

9.2 Significant issues relating to Legal Matters and Human Resources have been addressed at paragraph 4.4.

