

6. SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

REPORT OF: DIVISIONAL LEADER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMY
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Housing and Planning
Date of meeting: 14th November 2017

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with information about the preparation of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which will identify sites for housing, employment and other land uses, and will cover the period to 2031.
2. The paper seeks to provide Members with information on the early stages of preparation of the Site Allocations DPD; the proposed governance arrangements; and engagement with the development community, which will support the preparation process.

Summary

3. This report:
 - a) Provides information on the early stages of preparation of the Site Allocations DPD, which includes a Call for Sites, the preparation of a Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), and a Site Selection Paper;
 - b) Sets out the proposed arrangements for the establishment of a Member Working Group to oversee the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD and seeks this Committee's approval of the Working Group. Draft Terms of Reference for the Member Working Group are set out at Appendix 1.
 - c) Notifies Members about the establishment of a Developer Liaison Group to engage with the development community, and to promote constructive dialogue.

Recommendations

4. **That the Scrutiny Committee:**
 - (i) Notes the early stages of the Site Allocations DPD process;**
 - (ii) Agrees to the establishment of a Member Working Group to oversee the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD;**
 - (iii) Notes the establishment of the Mid Sussex Developer Liaison Group.**
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Background

5. At the Examination hearings into the District Plan, the Council committed to prepare a Site Allocations DPD, which would identify sufficient housing sites to provide the Council with a five year housing land supply to 2031.
6. Preparation of a Site Allocations DPD also provides an opportunity to review the provision of employment land in the District, and to ensure that sufficient land is allocated to meet identified employment need over the Plan period. There is also an opportunity to safeguard land for other uses such as community buildings or green infrastructure through the Site Allocations DPD.
7. On 16th October 2017, Cabinet approved a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS), which set out the timetable to take the District Plan 2031 to adoption in early 2018, and for the preparation of a Site Allocations DPD, to be adopted in 2020.
8. The LDS noted that preparation of a Site Allocations DPD would commence in October 2017. The LDS timeline is set out for reference at Appendix 2.

Site Allocations DPD

9. The first stage of preparation of a Sites Allocations DPD is to identify sites for consideration and assessment. The Council published a Call for Sites on 4th October 2017, which will close on 31st October 2017. The Call for Sites asks landowners and agents to submit details of any sites they want to promote for housing, employment or other uses.
10. Officers have been proactively contacting a wide range of landowners, including private individuals, West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups to improve awareness of the current Call for Sites.
11. Evidence will need to be prepared to support and inform the identification of suitable sites for allocation. These include, but are not limited to:
 - (a) Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment and Site Selection Paper;
 - (b) Sustainability Appraisal;
 - (c) Habitats Regulation Assessment;
 - (d) Transport and Highways Assessment; and
 - (e) Landscape Assessment.

Many of these studies will be iterative as options for development emerge through the plan making process.

Members Working Group

12. It is proposed to set up a task and finish Member Working Group to support the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD. The Working Group will be asked to oversee and advise on a range of technical work, including the methodology for the SHELAA and the Site Selection Paper, the assessment of sites and on the development of options for inclusion in the Issues and Options consultation document. The Member Working Group will comprise seven Members, with representative political balance. The Member Working Group will report back to the Scrutiny Committee for Housing and Planning at regular intervals.

The full terms of reference for the Member Working Group are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment and Site Selection Paper

13. The Council is required to produce a SHELAA to identify sufficient land to meet its housing and employment needs. Previously the Council has produced the document in two parts, one relating to housing land (April 2016) and the other to employment land (May 2016). The new SHELAA will incorporate both housing and employment availability assessments.
14. Officers are recommending that the opportunity to review the SHELAA methodology is taken to ensure that the new SHELAA is robust and complies with Government Guidance reflecting best practice.
15. Officers will liaise with the Member Working Group, adjacent local authorities and representatives of the development industry to gain support for the methodology for the revised document. The Member Working Group will be consulted on draft options as these are developed.
16. It is proposed that the new SHELAA will provide a high level assessment of sites, only removing those sites which are significantly constrained by national designations. The Site Selection Paper will however provide a more detailed assessment of the opportunities and constraints associated with each site, and an assessment of whether identification of the site for development would comply with the spatial strategy set out in the District Plan. This process will lead to a much shorter list of sites with development potential.
17. The short list of sites identified through the SHELAA and Site Selection Paper assessments will be proposed for inclusion within an Issues and Options consultation document, which will be published in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations.

Developer Liaison Group

18. In the Mid Sussex District Council Statement of Community Involvement, the Council commits to 'front load' consultation activity, to identify potential issues and options. To assist with this, Officers are seeking to establish a Mid Sussex Developers Liaison Group which would include representatives from across the development industry. Regular meetings will be held with the Group at key stages throughout the Site Allocation DPD preparation process. It is intended that the meetings will provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue and will inform the Plan making process. In addition, the Developer Liaison Group will provide an opportunity to deal with Development Management issues and processes.

Next Steps

19. Subject to Scrutiny Committee approval, the next steps will be to develop a draft methodology for the SHELAA and the Site Selection Paper, and to consult the Member Working Group and the Developer Liaison Group on the draft proposals.
20. A public consultation (Regulation 18) is programmed to take place in September/October 2018.

Other Options Considered

21. Officers recommend that the working arrangements as presented will provide a positive framework for preparation of a Site Allocations DPD.

Financial Implications

22. There are no direct financial implications of working arrangements and it is considered that a constructive approach going forward will help to make the preparation of the Plan more efficient.

Risk Management Implications

23. The Council has committed to the preparation of a Site Allocations DPD to enable the delivery of the housing requirement set out in the District Plan. If the Site Allocations DPD is not adopted, in accordance with the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme there is a risk that the Council will not have a Plan-led system, and will not be able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, which will mean it is vulnerable to continued speculative applications for development.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

24. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared at the appropriate stage during the preparation of the DPD.

Other Material Implications

25. There are no other material implications.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Member Working Group

Appendix 2: LDS Timetable