

Addendum - Local Plan update and Government Policy Changes

Planning Policy Committee, Thursday, 19 January 2023

Report of: Interim Chief Planning Officer - Cliff Thurlow

Purpose: For Decision

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Recommendation to Committee:

- i) That in light of the written Ministerial Statement from the Secretary of State and following advice from the Council's appointed consultant, DAC/Arup, a letter is sent immediately to the Local Plan Inspector setting out how the Council intends to proceed with a shorter-term Local Plan and carry it forward to adoption.
- ii) That the Interim Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, be authorised to agree the letter.

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- 1 The Council has commissioned DAC/Arup planning consultants ('the Consultants') to advise on its strategic planning in view of the recent statements by the Government on future national planning policy and the consultation on changes to the NPPF. DAC/Arup are specialists in plan-making and work with the Planning Advisory Service.
 - 2 The Council has now received advice that it should progress its emerging Local Plan as quickly as possible with a shortened plan period of five years. Accordingly, the Council has been advised that it should write to the Inspector immediately setting out how it intends to proceed on this basis.
 - 3 The Consultants believe there is a short window of opportunity for the Council and so recommend that the matter is now urgent because:
 - a. The government has proposed interim reforms to the NPPF which provide additional planning certainty around matters such as the green belt. However, the government has also announced a wider reform of the NPPF, which will introduce uncertainty once again. The Council should take advantage of this period of certainty for the green belt to take its plan forward.

- b. In conjunction with the NPPF consultation, the government has also published more details as to how they intend to change the plan-making process as part of the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill. The envisioned changes are extensive and will affect almost every aspect of plan-making. The reform is intended to be introduced in late 2024, with current consultation on specific deadlines for local authorities to transition to the new system. The indicative time period before all councils will be required to commence plans under the new system is longer for councils with an up to date adopted plan. Should the Inspector agree with the five-year plan, the need to commence a new style plan would be postponed.
- 4 Officers note that the Local Plan Inspectors have been advised by the Government that they should take all steps not to find Local Plans unsound.
 - 5 It is essential for the Council to have an up to date Plan in place to avoid the risks of uncontrolled development in the District and of unsustainable financial pressure from defending speculative appeals.
 - 6 The modified five-year plan approach will have regard to both the infrastructure constraints and needs of the District, the need for affordable housing, possible changes to land use designations in the District (e.g. AONB), and future plan-making reform.
 - 7 DAC/Arup will draft the letter to the Inspector and this will be sent to all Committee members for their review shortly.