



CABINET: 27th June 2023

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Dowling

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SUBJECT: LOCAL PLAN 2040 – CONSULTATION FEEDBACK ON ISSUES & OPTIONS CONSULTATION

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the feedback received through the Local Plan 2040 Scope, Issues and Options consultation which ended in January 2022 and endorse the publication of the two Consultation Feedback Reports so that all interested parties can review what comments have been submitted to the Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the Consultation Feedback Report on the Local Plan 2040 Scope, Issues and Options consultation (provided at Appendix A) be noted and endorsed.

2.2 That the Consultation Feedback Report on the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, 2021 (provided at Appendix B) be noted and endorsed.

2.3 That the next steps in the Local Plan 2040 preparation process set out at Section 4.0 of this report are noted.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 The Local Plan 2040: Scope, Issues and Options public consultation ran for ten weeks (four weeks longer than the statutory requirement) from 18 November

2021 to 27 January 2022. This was carried out under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. The main consultation document(s) comprised the "Local Plan 2040 Scope, Issues and Options consultation" paper which covered the following topics:

1. Scope
2. Portrait of West Lancashire
3. Issues
4. Vision
5. Objectives
6. Indicators
7. Policy Areas

3.2 The summaries of comments received to this main consultation are included in Appendix A. The main paper was consulted on alongside an update to the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2021. Summaries of site specific comments made to the SHELAA are provided in a separate report (see Appendix B).

3.3 As this consultation took place whilst some Covid restrictions remained in place, the consultation was adapted from the usual procedure, including greater use of digital and online engagement. The consultation involved several strands of public and stakeholder engagement, which included the following:

- A dedicated set of Local Plan webpages on the Council's website
- Online Survey for respondents to engage with, and respond to, the consultation material; the survey was based on the main consultation document and was conducted using the Council's "West Lancashire....Your Voice" digital engagement platform
- Leaflet distribution and Press adverts
- Letters / Emails to all contacts on the Local Plan consultation database, including reminder emails sent throughout the duration of the consultation
- Briefings for All Council Members and for Parish and Town Councils
- Engagement with student population at Edge Hill University, including attendance at Edge Hill University Sustainability Festival
- Virtual consultation meetings
- Unstaffed exhibitions and online exhibition
- A Developers Forum
- Engagement with local businesses
- Duty to Co-operate meetings with Neighbouring Authorities

3.4 The consultation went well, with active engagement from the public and stakeholders in the process. A total of 232 individuals and organisations responded to the Scope, Issues and Options consultation, generating several hundred separate comments on a variety of topics. The majority of respondents used the online survey tool to submit their consultation. In a small number of cases, respondents sent in separate written feedback, and these were added to comments received online.

3.5 The Consultation Feedback Report provided at Appendix A sets out a summary of responses received from all aspects of the consultation exercise but the

following gives an indication of some of the key messages and themes emerging from the consultation:

- Protection of Green Belt
- Protection of Grade 1 Agricultural Land for food security and climate change
- Priority to be given to brownfield development, over greenfield
- Climate change and sustainability should be a top priority of the Plan
- Flood Risk and water management concerns
- Affordable housing and homes for older people
- Importance of biodiversity and habitats
- Traffic and congestion concerns
- Need for infrastructure to serve new development / strain on existing services and infrastructure
- Developers and housebuilders generally supportive of the Plan approach and encourage growth

3.6 At the current time, the priority is to publish the comments received through the consultation so that all interested parties are aware of the nature of the feedback that the Council has received. As such, the Feedback Report does not include any Council response to the comments received, particularly as the purpose of the consultation was to gather initial views and did not set out specific proposals which could be commented on. It is important to publish this as soon as practicable because, while the formal consultation on the Scope and Issues and Options is now closed, Regulation 18 of the Local Planning Regulations covers the whole preparation of the Local Plan until Publication stage. Councils preparing a Local Plan are open to receiving and considering any comments submitted throughout the preparation of the Local Plan, even those received informally outside of formal consultation periods. The publication of the Consultation Feedback Report is important to maintain the transparency of the process and stimulate further dialogue with stakeholders.

3.7 As the Plan goes through the next stages of preparation, the Council will need to demonstrate how it has taken responses to previous consultations into account and how these have informed the contents of the next version of the Plan to be consulted on. In later feedback reports (produced after the next public consultation), the Council will respond collectively to each issue that has been raised. These will be published and will eventually form part of the submission to the Planning Inspectorate to be considered as part of the Local Plan Examination.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 Officers are now preparing a Preferred Options version of the new Local Plan. This will involve close working, and regular meetings, with the Portfolio Holder for Planning as well as updating and briefing Cabinet and Members in general at appropriate times on the progress of, and proposals for, the Preferred Options.

4.2 The preparation of the Preferred Options will, firstly, involve establishing the preferred Strategic Development Option for the housing and employment land requirement, the agreed period the Local Plan should cover and how the housing

and employment land requirement should be distributed across the Borough. This can then lead to an assessment of potential site allocations to identify what land should be allocated for development to deliver the preferred Strategic Development Option. Alongside this, specific policies will be drafted to address relevant topics and issues, drawing on the specific feedback received in the recent consultation on each topic/issue and on the latest evidence available to the Council on that topic/issue.

- 4.3 As such, there is a great deal of work involved in preparing the Local Plan Preferred Options and so it is not anticipated that the final draft Preferred Options document will be brought to Cabinet for their consideration until later in 2023, after which public consultation on the Preferred Options will be able to take place.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Although the decision being considered in this report only relates to the publishing of Consultation Feedback Reports, it is part of the wider preparation of a new Local Plan and the Local Plan will have implications for sustainability and for the delivery of the objectives of the Community Strategy. However, at this early stage in the preparation of the Local Plan, it is not possible to identify what the precise implications will be. The Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan will be an important consideration in the preparation of the new Local Plan.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial and resource implications related to the publishing of the Consultation Feedback Report.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There are no risks associated with the publishing of consultation feedback received through the Local Plan Review consultation.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision Cabinet are being asked to make is simply related to the publication of a Consultation Feedback Report and so there is no direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

Appendix A – Local Plan 2040: Scope, Issues and Options Consultation Feedback Report

Appendix B – Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Feedback / Site Specific Comments